



# ISLAMIC POLITY

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STUDENTS' FRIENDS

ALLAHABAD : BENARES



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# Preface

This small book on Islamic Polity comprises the substance of some of my lectures given to the M. A. classes. It has indeed been written in response to the desire of my pupils. The need has long been felt by students of the Medieval Period (so called) of Indian History, especially the post graduates, of a handy book containing a condensed and comprehensive account of Muslim Polity, both in theory as well as in its application in India.

This last fifteen years or more it has been the persistent and earnest demand of my pupils, both of the M. A. and B. A. classes, that I should, for their benefit, bring out all my lectures in book form. I have sincerely wished to comply, but due to sheer want of time, have never ended in fulfilling their desire. The present book is but a very small fraction of all that they have desired and I have wished to do for them.

I have attempted to present in a brief readable form the latest researches of other scholars as well as mine on the various aspects of Muslim institutions. Some of these such as the Jiziyah, the vexed question of the ownership of land under Muslim rulers, a comparative political estimate of Babar, Rana Sunga and Sher Shah, the biography of certain important terms, are based on original sources and are presented for the first time in the present volume.

No one is more conscious of the fact that my conclusions and views might provoke some opposition in certain quarters. But I have an open mind and would be only too glad to revise my views should any one convince me of my mistake, on scientific grounds. I shall receive all healthy and useful criticism with grateful appreciation.

The work has been printed under very annoying press difficulties due to the turmoil of the recent past. It may therefore contain many errors of printing. I would crave the indulgence of the reader for all such blemishes.

In conclusion I wish to record that my wife and my nephew K. C. A. have prepared the index and my daughter Sarita has helped me in reading the proofs.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AA,	Ain-i-Akbari (Text) Bibliotheca Indica.
A,	Arabic.
Aghnides,	Muhammadan Theories of Finance by N. P. Aghnids.
RASB,	Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.
Baillie,	Land Tax of India according to the Mohammadan Law, translated from the Fatawa Alamgiri, by N. B. E. Baillie.
Blochmann,	Ain i-Akbari, Vol. I., English Translation by H. Blochmann. (ASB).
CMH,	Cambridge Medieval History.
CVV,	A History of Medieval Hindu India, by C. V. Vaidya. 3 Vols.
EI,	Epigraphia Indica.
Elliot,	Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own Historians. 8 Vols.
Enc. I,	Encyclopaedia of Islam.
H,	Hindi.
IA,	Indian Antiquary.
Proc. IHRC,	Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission.
Jarrett,	Ain-i-Akbari Vols. II and III, Eng. Trans. by Col. H. S. Jarrett.
JASB,	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
LS,	Lughat-i-Saidi.
JUPHS,	Journal of the U. P. Historical Society.

- Macdonald, Theology, Jurisprudence and constitutional Theory of Islam by D. B. Macdonald.
- MQ, Quran, Eng. Trans, by Māulvi Muhammad Ali. (London, Islamic Review office, Woking, England, 1917)
- MU, Maasir-ul-Umara, of Samsam-ud-ud-daula Shahnawaz Khan, Eng. Trans. by Beveridge,
- MW, Sanskrit-English Dictionary by Monier Williams.
- P, Persian.
- Qureshi, Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi by I. H. Qureshi.
- S, Sanskrit.
- T, Turkish.
- TF, Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi of Zia uddin Barani

# Part I—Islamic Polity

## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC POLITY

#### 1. GENESIS OF THE CALIPHATE : ITS TRANSFORMATION

The Laws of the Faith never sufficed to curb the ambition of kings

All well-developed human institutions grow out of a number of rudimentary elements, to trace the multifarious ramifications of which is always a problem of great difficulty and complexity. But the origin and growth of the Muslim polity is a topic which presents to the student peculiar problems of its own. The very complexity of the subject, however, gives it a greater interest and importance and makes it necessary for us to study the early Muslim institutions in order to trace their bearing on those which, in later ages, grew under the patronage and rule of various Muslim monarchs in different countries. To understand the political institutions of Muslim India it is necessary to have some idea of the salient features of the early Islamic institutions, their growth and transformation.

Islam as preached by the Prophet Muhammad was not an innovation, but a movement of reform and renovation directed to the regeneration of a people whose political, social and moral life seemed to him to call for an urgent upliftment.<sup>1</sup> This pre-Muslim Arab Society was called by them when they became Musalmans, *al-jahiliya* (the age of ignorance)<sup>2</sup>. A polytheistic community sunk in superstition and mainly leading a nomadic life, the Arab people possessed no common bond to cement them into a nation-wide unity, no advanced political life, nor system of law. They were governed by a tribal organization the unit of which was the family. The sanction of a dubious custom of blood-feud provided them with such cover as it could against the

<sup>1</sup> Quran, II, 212; III, 19; and concerning prophets, passim.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, 8.



rapacity of a tyrannical or covetous neighbour. Muhammad undertook the simple and yet tremendously difficult task of welding this congeries of mutually warring tribes into a united, single brotherhood, bound by a common ideal and common aspirations. The inestimable achievement of the Prophet speaks for itself far more eloquently than any words could tell. He rid them of their superstitions and suicidal customs without destroying any of the essential or useful elements of their organisations. These he only modified in order to make them capable of a wider application. To bring about national unity, in place of the family tie, he substituted a common faith. This faith which united the Arabic people into a compact nation or community could be put in a simple sentence: "There is one God and Muhammad is His Prophet."

Early hostility to the creed in the place of its birth created the need, among the believers, for self-help and self-defence, and this circumstance not only made them all the more compact but eventually transformed them into a military brotherhood. The same circumstance led, more or less, to the body of the Prophet's followers being isolated from the rest of the Arabian society. Mainly settled at Medina in the beginning, they were virtually an army in camp with Muhammad as their Commander-in-Chief, Supreme Judge and Executive Head. Thus the circumstances of its origin made it what may be called a politically organised society of which the sole aim was the propagation of the creed it had accepted. Such was the state which circumstances compelled the Prophet to create. The Quran, therefore, laid down for the believers such principles of statecraft and such political obligations as the infant Muslim community needed, enjoining on them the duty of unquestioning obedience to the Prophet as the messenger of God's will<sup>1</sup>. This was the source from which emanated in future

<sup>1</sup> "O you who believe obey God and obey the apostle and those in authority among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the apostle, if you believe in God and the Last Day this is (the) better part and very good in the end."—Ch. 4, ver. 59 p. 90. Maulana Mohammad Ali's tr. of the Quran.

times the doctrine of the Divine origin of Civil Government and Law.

But the infant Muslim State in the time of the Prophet was far from anything like the subsequent Caliphates of Damascus or Baghdad. It was a simple organisation ministering to the simple civic requirements of the brotherhood of the believers and fulfilling the object of the creed, which, as stated above, was, according to the Divine injunction,<sup>1</sup> 'to wage war against the unbelievers (Dar-ul-Harb) until they acknowledge the superiority of the Muslims and the religion of God prevailed.' This injunction originally perhaps far less ambitious and given under different circumstances, roused in later generations the ambition of a pan-Islamic State, although there is not the slightest hint in it to create a world Empire.

Muhammad did nothing more than this, and the position of the infant Muslim State at his death may be summed up thus: it was a religio-military organisation whose existence was meant solely for, and could be justified only by its being a useful instrument for subserving the ends of the creed. Unlike the Greek ideal the State was not an end in itself: it was but a means to an end and no more. Therefore the believers alone could be citizens of this State, the sole qualification for citizenship being acceptance of the Faith. The working system was essentially simple and of a rudimentary nature. In theory, it was a theocracy, a State, that is, of which the sovereign was God, it being the instrument of the expression and propagation of His will, that is to say, His Faith. In its methods it was, of necessity, a military brotherhood banded against all the hostile communities surrounding it. Beyond this the Prophet had bequeathed nothing to the community of the believers. No political theories were ever conceived by him, nor were any principles of Law bearing upon the innumerable problems which subsequently confronted the *Khalifas* defined, nor yet any system of Government outlined. Nor again did he leave any indications even

<sup>1</sup> VIII. 39. and IX. 29.

as regards the principle of succession after him.<sup>1</sup> And yet the prolific imagination of future generations discovered, thanks to the ever-expandable fiction of the *Hadith*, theories and solutions applicable to every conceivable problem, in the body of the revelation itself, because there can be nothing beyond the cognisance of the Almighty, the Giver of the original Law.

After the Prophet's death, in the settlement of the succession question, the ancient Arab custom of election prevailed, and thus became, for all time, in theory, at any rate, the accepted principle of succession for all Muslims except the legitimists. 'The theory of the legitimists was that the leadership belonged to the leader, not because he was elected to it by the Muslim community, but because it was his right. He was appointed to it by God as completely as Muhammad had been.'<sup>2</sup> In actual practice, however, the inevitable selfish instinct of man reasserted itself against Duty and Right, and the elective principle of succession had to make a compromise with the opposite principle of heredity and nomination in an ever-increasing degree, and was eventually, after the fall of the Umayyads, completely superseded by the hereditary principle in Persia, Central Asia and India, etc., as also in the Western Muslim kingdoms. The process by which this result was reached was helped by another circumstance, viz., the vast expansion of the empire, which made election by the whole community of the Faithful a physical impossibility. The modern device of overcoming this difficulty by electing representatives who in turn would elect the *Khalifah* was unknown to the Arabs. Consequently the circle of electors was at first limited to the leading men of the capital town. Then it was gradually reduced to eleven, five and even one, so much so that the sovereign could appoint his own successor. Finally election was changed to

<sup>1</sup> Verse 58 of Ch. IV, of course, directs the believers 'to make over trusts to those worthy of them'. But this does not seem to have either any bearing on or to have been intended to apply to the question of succession.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, 9.

a merely formal ceremony of '*baiat*' or submission.

But besides election another principle or rather precedent entered into the field, viz., nomination, which the people were only to confirm. Abu Bakar had nominated Umar to be his successor or the next *Khalifah*, and the community had no option but to confirm him. By this precedent a certain right was recognised in the *Khalifah* to nominate his successor, provided he chose one suitable and eligible in other respects.<sup>3</sup>

The *Khalifah* (successor) who was chosen after Muhammad's death to lead the community, the veteran Abu Bakr, found himself at the head of a religio-military brotherhood—a mass of Beduin tribes sprung suddenly into power and united by a common interest—whose ambition for the glory of conquest and greed of gold had already been worked up to fever-heat by the tempting fruits of their initial triumphs. Thus Muhammad became the founder at once of a faith and a nation. 'A race of enthusiasts he inspired the Arabs with the idea of purifying the beliefs of mankind; a nation of robbers, he opened out to them the prospect of plundering a world. The double aspect of this conception characterises the whole history of Islam.'

The *Khalifah* was the vicar of the Prophet in all save the apostolic office. He commanded the Arab forces and conducted expeditions. He administered the state revenue and dealt with the finances. He had full power over the treasury i.e., Bait-ul-mal, a name by which the treasury is known to this day; he exercised judicial duties, administered criminal justice and, most important of all, led the Divine service at the time of prayer. In short he combined in himself all the three functions of sovereignty, viz., legislature, executive and military, and judiciary. But his personal life was extremely simple, unpretentious, and absolutely free from any pomp or ostentation. He worked in the spirit of a humble and sincere servant of God with the one sole aim and object of fulfilling the mission of the Prophet.

<sup>3</sup> Macdonald, 14.

The age-long hostility and ruinous wars of the Byzantine and Persian empires had brought about a favourable situation for the advance of the Islamic forces, and the vast booties which fell into their hands offered temptation for ever-increasing numbers to rally to its banners.<sup>1</sup> It became a story of a succession of victories and ravages of the neighbouring provinces, with but a few ineffective reverses. Thus extensive conquests were made under the first four *Khalifahs*, but when the *Khilafat* passed to the Umayyads, it quickly sprang into a vast empire extending from Kabul in the east to Egypt the west, and before the sceptre had passed from the Umayyads to the Abbasides, it extended from India to Spain. Before his death the Prophet saw himself master of Arabia and had already begun to assail his neighbours. Four years later, A.D., 636, the power of Persia was shattered at the battle of Qadisiya, and when the last Sassanian died in A.D. 651, the Oxus was reached. A century from the Hijra the northern frontier had advanced to the Jaxartes and the conquest of Sind had brought Islam into contact with India. In the west Alexandria fell in 640, Antioch in 638, and Carthage was torn from the Empire sixty years later. Spain was invaded in 710, and the triumphant advance of Islam was only checked when it met the youthful vigour of Europe under Charles Martel on the momentous field of Tours in A.D. 732. Islam was essentially an expansive religion and it found an opportunity to hurl itself against the whole world, bidding it choose between conversion, subjection and the sword.

But while this dazzling external activity was going on, two more movements, deeper and more far-reaching in their significance though not so conspicuous, were imperceptibly going on within the body of Islam. First, the creed of Faith was being definitely formulated and its sources were being defined. Secondly, the Caliphate as a social organism

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that in the beginning it was the poorest section of the people who joined the banners of Muhammad, while the aristocrats of Mecca resisted his movement to the last and only submitted to it ultimately as a matter of expediency.

was undergoing a profound change both in character and form. "The practical needs of a great polity and the unruly temper of the Arabs combined to transform the Caliphate into a personal rule of an entirely secular type under the Umayyads; then under the Abbāsides, into a monarchy on the Persian pattern, whose apparent orthodoxy but ill-concealed the despotism, the violence and the administrative mismanagement which were pushing the Empire to its ruin." In the third century of the Hijra the Sultanate superseded the *Khilafat*<sup>1</sup> which was reduced henceforth to a purely decorative title. The Caliph had to be satisfied with investing the de facto rulers with a show of legitimacy. Simultaneously as the circumference of Islamic triumphs widened its centrifugal elements became stronger and consequently the centre weaker and weaker to hold together the strings of the vast empire under its sway. Independent kingdoms were founded by newly converted military adventurers of distant non-Arab races and lands. But the anvil of the unfailing ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Muslim jurists had no difficulty in making the Law of Islam pliable enough to bring such rulers within the ambit of legitimacy.

## II. The Growth of the Administrative System of the Caliphate

From the above attempt to understand the circumstances of the rise and growth of the Muslim polity it would clearly appear that the administrative system of Islam was not based on any pre-conceived theories of politics. On the contrary, the machinery of the *Khilafat* was, in its development, conditioned by its environment, by the problems which it was called upon to solve and by the character of the actors who were called upon to handle it. The poverty and destitution of the followers of the prophet was a factor which exercised a far-reaching influence on it. One of the foremost problems with which Muhammad was faced was to provide his indigent followers with subsistence. This was the origin of (1) war booty, (2) poor tax (*zakat*) and (3) voluntary contributions, which three items constituted

<sup>1</sup> Fred. Sykes; History of Persia.

the State revenue at the start. This was to be distributed among the body of the Faithful, the principle of distribution being that the kith and kin of the Prophet were, according to an accepted custom of the Arabs, to get more than the rest. When the headship devolved upon Abu Bakr, he also made some alterations to settle the system of administration in the light of the growing needs of the situation. But the credit of being its chief creator must go to Umar First (13-23 A.H.) or (A.D. 634-644), the greatest and most far-sighted statesman among the Arabs. Although actual texts of a covenant of Umar settling the principles of administration in relation to the conquered nations were forged, as usual, in later ages, the practical system which he established was based on experience. Usually the conqueror of a new country or province was appointed its governor, and some other high offices were entrusted to the Arabs. But most of the subordinate officers were allowed to retain their posts. Nor was the system modified or changed in any manner. The only innovation was the imposition of some new taxes and certain restrictions and disabilities upon unbelievers, thus depriving them of the rights of citizenship under the Muslim State. On the other hand, even the language in which records and minutes were kept was not Arabic which was introduced as late as the reign of Abdul Malik. There was, however, one remarkable innovation. The Arabs became the standing army and the militia; the State had to maintain it for its protection; the provincials had to supply the money. Thus when the Arabs consolidated their conquest, they took over the local administrative systems of the several countries. They had no new organization or system to contribute. They possessed none. Simple necessity compelled them not only to retain the existing systems of the conquered peoples but also to entrust non-Arabs and even non-Muslims with important situations in the State.

Umar divided the Empire into governorships, entrusting them to military officers, while the Commander-in-Chief collected the taxes. With the expansion of the Empire the circle of governorships was enlarged and the

functions and the powers of governors varied. In Egypt the Governor had charge also of the collection of taxes. In order to avoid corruption and malpractices Umar assigned fixed salaries to officers. He also appointed salaried judges (*Qadhis*) in all important places. The Umayyads transferred the Capital to Damascus. Here they were in the midst of a Christian population and exposed to the influence of the ancient Greek and Byzantine civilisations which soon made themselves felt in almost every department of cultural, social and political life. In the domain of politics they freely borrowed and assimilated Greek and Byzantine institutions. As a rule there were three main divisions of governmental activity, viz., political administration, taxation and leadership in prayer. The division was based on the principle of separation of functions and powers and hence usually in charge of three persons independent of one another, but sometimes all the three functions were vested in one and the same person.

The Umayyads were not actuated by any religious feelings or ideals. They represented the Arab aristocracy and were, with one or two exceptions, thoroughly worldly as well in their outlook as in character. Some of them wallowed in the luxuries of the harem and the cup. Some, however, like Abdul Malik, were highly gifted and left their stamp on the government by consolidating the whole Empire and reorganising the administration. Existing departments were improved and new ones opened, as for example, the postal department, coinage, etc., and public works and humanitarian institutions were established, e.g. mosques and colleges, asylums and hospitals, etc. The administrative machinery was still very simple. The main departments of the government were :

- (1) *Diwan-ul-Kharaj* (Board of Land Tax), i.e., the Finance Department.
- (2) *Diwan-ul-Khatam* (Board of Signet), i.e., a sort of Privy Council.
- (3) *Diwan-ul-Mustaqillat*, (Board of Revenue), where all the different taxes were received, registered



and calculated ; e.g., rent for the use and occupation of public lands.

(4) Diwan-ul-Rasa'il (Board of Correspondence).

*Judiciary* : The Judiciary as a universal system embracing the whole empire had no existence at that time. In fact, settlement of disputes among the non-Muslim subjects was not deemed as any concern of theirs by the *Khalifah*. Hence at first judges were appointed only for settlement of disputes among Arab warriors and their dependents. They did not trouble much about non-Muslims. The government allowed to non-Muslims freedom in the settlement of their private affairs. The religious heads of the non-Muslim community occasionally performed the duty of judge between them. Consequently, the *Qadhis* were appointed only in large towns. Later on, the governors acquired the authority of appointing and dismissing the *Kadhis* in their respective provinces.

The Ummayyad rule lasted only for a century. In A. D. 752, the seal and the sceptre fell from the hands of the last prince of the line into those of their rivals, the Abbasides, who preferred to be the supporters of the descendents of *Ali*. They rose with the help and support of the Alids or '*legitimists*' and once established securely in their position they kicked away the ladder by which they had ascended. They fixed their capital in the newly built city of Baghdad on the borders of Persia. The Abbasides were avowedly more religious and devoted to the aim and mission of Islam. But they came under the irresistible influence of the hoary Persian culture and Persian institutions, which, in course of time, completely transformed the outlook of the *Khilafat*.

Under Saffah, the first *Khalifah*, there were twelve provinces in the Empire, including Sind. Later on, larger provinces were split up into two or more. Countries newly conquered were ruled by governors of neighbouring districts who appointed their own lieutenants.

Different branches of the administrative machinery were greatly elaborated, and new departments as well as offices created according as the exigencies of administration

demanded. The dynasty of the Abbasides lasted for full five hundred years, during which it had also its weak and strong, capable and incapable, fanatic and liberal rulers. Some of them made lasting contributions to the reconstruction and improvement of the administrative mechanism. The first Khalifah, Saffah, made a beginning by entrusting the headship of the most important office of the *Diwan-ul-Kharaj* (Board of Taxes) to Khalid ibn-Barmak, a Persian convert. The next most important post, viz. "Wizarat" or the office of the 'Wazir', came into existence about this time and was, in all likelihood, of Persian origin. Later on, the Wazir was superseded by the Amir-ul-Umara. But the 'Wizarat' underwent variations of such magnitude in its actual powers and functions that it occasioned lengthy discussions and analysis on the part of the jurists to give a legal recognition to the different types of 'Wazirs'. When the *Khalifah* happened to be a weakling, the Wazir became all in all and exercised practically all his functions and authority. On the other hand, when the case was the reverse the Wazir was allowed very restricted powers and always kept within limits. Nevertheless the appointment and dismissal of the Wazir were always in the hands of the *Khalifah*. The jurists have put the two kinds of wazir under the categories of 'unlimited' and 'limited'. They have similarly classified governorships adding a third category in this case, namely, governorship by usurpation. 'Every political adventurer who took possession of a province without the sanction or authority of the sovereign, nay, against his will, was so to speak 'a governor by usurpation'. The *Khalifah* had no option but to recognise and confirm him.

The following departments which existed under Khalifah Matwakkil may be taken as typical of the framework of the executive of the *Khilafat* :—

(1) *Diwan-ul-Kharaj* (O)<sup>1</sup>; (2) *Diwan-ul-Dhiyyah* (N) i.e., Board of Crown lands; (3) *Diwan-ul-Zimmiah* (N),

<sup>1</sup> Letters O and N, i.e., Old and New, signify whether the department under this name existed under the Umayyads or whether it was a new one.

Board of Accounts ; (4) Diwan-ul-Jundwal Shaqitoyyah, (N), the Military Board ; (5) Diwan-ul-Mawali wa Chilwan, (N), the Board of Clients and slaves of the reigning family, a very important office but unparalleled in any other kingdom ancient or modern ; (6) Diwan-ul-Barid, (O) the Board of Posts. Posts were carried by carriers as well as horses and camels. It was, however, meant only for the use of the State and not for the people. (7) Diwan-ul-Ziman wa Mafiqat, (N) Board of General Expenditure. Some other departments, however, existed under other Caliphs, e.g., Diwan-ul-Tauqi (N) Board of Requests and Petitions ; Nazr-ul-Mazalim, (N) the highest office for the control of administration and judiciary ; Baitul Mal, (O) the Revenue Board, etc. etc.

In the provinces the spiritual functions of the Caliph were performed by a representative, who could be the governor himself or some other person. The judiciary remained more or less the same as under the Ummayyads. As a rule no interference was made with the life of the people. Every village or town was left free to manage and conduct its own affairs.

There was of course a police system to which was later added a detective department, or a department of secret investigation.

For the general supervision, maintenance of peace and order, preservation of good morals, and the enforcement of a great variety of other civic obligations, there used to be a Muhtasib or Prefect of Police.

## CHAPTER II

# POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE SULTANATE OF DELHI.

CIRCA 1200—1525 A. C.

*Introductory.*—The Ghaznavite invasions in the last quarter of the 10th century of the Christian Era revealed a state of affairs in the political sphere of India which was the direct result of the dominance of the culture and socio-religious ideals and outlook of the post-Gupta 'neo-Brahmanic' ascendancy over the mind of Indian humanity. The war between Jaipal and Subuktigin, and more emphatically still the campaigns of Mahmud of Ghazni, unmistakably manifested that there was something radically wrong with the Indian political system and that it was thoroughly rotten and worn out to the core. That after Mahmud's death for a century and a half the country had comparative respite<sup>1</sup> and was spared the agony of plunder, spoliation and ruination at the hands of an invader like Mahmud was due not to any political solidarity, military organisation or skill of its rulers, but to the simple fact that the troubled waters of Central Asia had not thrown up during this period any ambitious or bold adventurer like Mahmud. But no sooner another one emerged on the scene the self-same story of repeated campaigns and spoliation of this unfortunate land commenced once more, and the people were subjected to even greater torments and humiliation. The land seemed to have been orphaned. There was no one able to save her from the rapacity of the foreign invader. The Rajput rulers of the land had, by their utter incapacity to protect and hold it, as it were, created a vacuum in the political firmament. And the law that no vacuum can exist in the physical universe is equally true of the socio-political universe. This vacuum was

<sup>1</sup> There were some sporadic exceptions, such as the campaign of Ahmad Nialtigin, the ambitious commander of the Ghaznavi Sultan.

bound to be filled and, of course, by those who had the capacity and power to do so. There could be no greater proof of this void than the rapidity with which the whole land was swept over by these conquerors. Within less than a decade the entire country from east to west was brought under sway, and had they not been entangled and held up by their mutual rivalries and by the constant danger of invasion from the north-west, the Deccan and the southern country would also have been swamped with equal expedition and ease as was actually done a century later by the Khaljis. Thus so far as the conquest of the country was concerned it was, for the Turkish invaders, a mere walk over from end to end.

But while conquest was so quick and so easy, the task of reconstruction of an enduring political fabric, which devolved on the shoulders of the new masters of the land was extremely complex and difficult. There can be no denying the fact that during the first century and a half following the establishment of the Turkish rule several capable and strong rulers strove with much zeal and earnestness, according to their own lights, to reconstruct and consolidate a sound machinery of administration. But it is equally undeniable that hindered by their racial and communal vanity and isolationism combined with an extremely parochial religious outlook, they were never able to rise to the level of higher and nobler human ideas. The vision of Islam and its kingly obligations which the Sultans and their religious mentors had, had nothing in common with the one drawn by some of its greatest modern exponents, *e.g.*, 'an ideal society can be based on the principles of *equality, social justice*' (and shall we add, social or civil liberty) 'and *human brotherhood*' (Italics mine)<sup>1</sup>. Or again 'The principal bases on which the Islamic system is founded are (1) a belief in the unity, immateriality, power, mercy and supreme love of the Creator, (2) charity and brother-

<sup>1</sup> See 'Islamic Culture', Vol. XVIII, No. 4, for Oct. 1944, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of Islam by Justice Amir Ali, p. 226.

hood among mankind,.....'2. Nor did they adhere to their own conception of Islamic Polity. It was only used as a handy tool whenever it suited them and served their interests. Oftener than not dictates of personal ambition were stronger than the injunctions of the Faith as they understood them. As an experiment of building up an enduring political structure based on the good-will and confidence of the ruled and calculated to promote their general well being the Turkish hegemony proved a total failure. But even the strong monarchy which it succeeded in establishing for a time did not last more than a century and a half. The invasion of Timur was a result rather than a cause of its decline. To the outer world that invasion invested what was already a moribund corpse with the glory of a great and painful tragedy. That after Timur the life of the Sultanate was prolonged for another century and a quarter was due to external circumstances rather than to its intrinsic strength and solidarity. There could be two claimants for the coveted prize of the Delhi crown : (1) the Central Asiatic adventurers and (2) warriors or the princes of the house of Chittor who were rising to prominence in Rajputana. The former were involved in mutual wranglings while the latter were locked in a life and death struggle with the rulers of Gujrat and Malwa. This circumstance gave to the tottering Sultanate much too long a lease of life with the result that for close on a century the throne of Delhi remained in the hands mostly of weaklings or incapable and undeserving rulers. Even the mechanism of government became thoroughly outworn and rickety. The old order needed to yield place to a new one, an order born of a fresh and wider vision, and an invigorated spirit, and based on healthier principles and policies.

### **The Character of Turko-Afghan Polity**

The government of the Sultanate was a composite structure, a product of the combination of several elements, both foreign and indigenous. It naturally bore the complexion of both the race and the creed of its rulers. Although the Sultans explicitly or implicitly professed to carry out the

injunctions of the Prophet and the Qorán, and to act as representatives of the Khalifa, the actual conditions were very different. Religious obligations had invariably to yield to the demands of expediency and personal ambition. Moreover they had imported along with themselves a body of institutions which had already departed far from the Islamic theory and principles of government. The Caliphate had undergone a radical transformation in its Persian home. It was this amalgam of Perso-Arabic institutions which the Sultan brought into India. Further, the traditions of their Central Asian monarchies were not yet forgotten, and wrought their share of influence on the new system that was struggling to be born. Lastly there were the deep-rooted Indian socio-economic and political institutions which the Sultans found neither easy nor advisable to uproot. They found it inevitable to incorporate the indigenous institutions with their system both in the interests of its efficiency and durability: so the resultant system was the product of the assimilation of the several elements indicated above. The process of assimilation was, however, essentially slow and unconscious, the result of an inevitable force of circumstances rather than of free choice or of conscious design.

The kings and courtiers, though Turks by race, had become Persian by culture and were imbued with Persian ideas of monarchy. But their army was modelled on the Turko-Mongol system which they had brought into Persia also, while the Indian village self-government remained unaffected and was allowed to carry on its activities thereby influencing considerably the working of the government. To the indigenous land revenue system were added some taxes of a religious nature.

*The Problems of the Sultans.*—After their early conquests and the establishment of authority over the bulk of northern India, they were confronted with a threefold problem. First there was the problem of their own security which was threatened from three distinct quarters. There was the perennial problem of the defence of the north-west frontier. Then the Sultans had the rivalries and jealousies of the

ambitious Turkish adventurers and warriors themselves to reckon with. The throne had become a prize of might before which all other laws of succession—if there were any—were thrown on the scrap heap. Every Turkish noble considered himself equally entitled to capture the throne if he had the power. This tradition excited the cupidity of every noble or warrior to make a bid for the crown, and provided to the Sultans a plentiful source of peril and trouble to cope with. The third source of opposition were the Indian chiefs and warriors who had been deprived of their liberty and authority. They were constantly raking up trouble and turbulence all over the kingdom.

The second important problem was for the Sultans to reconstruct a new system, a new mechanism of government which should help ensure the good of the people and serve their interests and thus breed confidence in them. This, as we have indicated above, was a task of no small complexity. It required great administrative acumen and statesmanship to accomplish successfully.

The third problem was that of expanding the bounds of their dominions so as to bring the whole country ultimately under one monarchy. This was naturally conditioned by the degree of freedom and opportunity which their other entanglements left them.

The manner and method of the Sultans in tackling the aforesaid problems and the extent of their achievement must constitute the measure by which their success should be estimated.

## **B. The structure and working of the Government : Central**

*The Monarch*—Legally the Muslim Monarch was the Successor of the Prophet (*khalifah*) in his leadership of the secular state which the Prophet had founded almost unconsciously. The pontifical office of the Prophet had come to an end with his death. Some sort of a political society with a civil government had come into existence in the



lifetime of the Prophet himself. The Qoran recognised the divine origin of civil government and enjoined perfect obedience to the head thereof in the verse : "O believers obey God and obey the Apostle and those who have authority among you ; and if you have a dispute in any matter, refer it to God and the Apostle, if ye believe in God and the Last Day." Originally only one *Khalifah* was contemplated to be the head and leader of the entire body of the Faithful, but with the world-wide expansion of the khilafat within a century of its inception and the foundation of independent Muslim principalities, beginning with Spain as early as 756 A.D., it became necessary to elaborate and modify the legal theory to recognise the accomplished fact, and the legists were never found wanting in this art. It was laid down that the *Khalifah* being the source of all authority on earth, the authority exercised by the various kings and rulers in Islamic countries was legitimised after being approved by the *Khalifah*. Thus legally the Sultans were omnipotent, their authority restricted only by the law of the Qoran, and their position being sanctified by being divine in its origin.

In actual practice however the power of the Sultans depended on force of arms which was the only argument recognised by their rivals. The monarchy was his who had the longest arm and the mightiest sword. Their authority therefore knew no limitations excepting such practical ones as the opposition or turbulence of a discontented people, the revolt of an ambitious chief, or palace intrigues and revolutions. To this absolution was sought to be added the Persian halo of the Divinity of Kingship. But this was hardly recognised by their contemporaries. It received full recognition only in the case of the Mughal Emperors.

Thus the Monarchy of the Sultanate was a curious anomaly. It neither conformed fully to the Muslim religious law nor to Indian tradition or custom. Consequently it was regulated by no uniform law of succession either. It is true that the rulers usually sought to legitimise their

position by securing an ex post facto investiture by the *Khalifah*, but even this practice was not always followed, while the cloak of election by the magnates of the community was cast aside as soon as a ruler found himself strong enough to ignore them. The accessions of Balban and Ala-uddin Khalji are the most conspicuous cases in point.

The Monarch thus being the ultimate source of all authority was also the supreme judge as well as commander of the forces of the realm, all in one. He was also the maker of the administrative law which consisted of his orders and regulations.

*The aims and policy of the Sultans*—The professed aim of the Sultans was to propagate Islam and wage holy wars upon infidel lands and secondly to use their unbounded resources for the benefit of their subjects. Practice, however, was far different from theory. Rarely was the welfare of his subjects the primary concern of any prince among them.<sup>1</sup> Even the interests of the Faith had to wait before self-aggrandisement and worldly ambition. On the whole the government of the Sultans was not for the people; rather the people were for the government.

The policy of the Sultans was dictated by a variety of circumstances. They were faced by the difficulty of satisfying two mutually hostile interests, viz., the dictates of the Faith (as they understood them) which enjoined on them extirpation of idolatry, on the one hand, and winning the support and co-operation of the non-Muslim majority of their subjects, without which their position would be precarious, on the other. They could do everything with bayonets except sit on them. As Holderness says: "The conquerors and the conquered never completely fused, but came to know each other better, and the former found the latter too useful to think of exterminating them if that had been possible." Hence their Indian subjects of whom the bulk were non-Muslim had to be treated with reluctant toleration

<sup>1</sup> The exceptions were the Tughlaq Sultans

and consideration if only from expediency and not from choice. Medieval Hinduism had to be tolerated by the Sultans as a necessary evil. There was no alternative.

B. *The Central Government*—The Central Government was formed on the Persian model. The army which supported it was organised on the Turkish system. The council of ministers was adopted from the Persian system. In theory it was purely a consultative body and existed on the sufferance of the king. But in practice the powers and jurisdiction of the ministers severally and collectively varied greatly in proportion to the relative strength and ability of the king and the ministers. Sometimes the minister was practically all-in-all and the Sultan was reduced to the position of a nonentity. Witnessing this state of affairs the jurists, never to be beaten by new developments in the politics of the courts, legitimised the post of such wazirs by calling them Wazir-ul-tafwid, that is wazirs with unlimited authority. This class of wazirs "could exercise all the powers and prerogatives of the sovereign with only some nominal restrictions. He was required, for instance, to inform the monarch of all his measures and could not, without special permission, dismiss or transfer any officer appointed by the ruler. He could, however, appoint officers in the name of the sovereign and hear complaints against all officials whether appointed by the monarch or not. If the sovereign and the wazir both gave orders regarding the same matter in ignorance of each other's action, the command which had been issued first would stand. The sovereign, however, had the right to over-ride his minister when there was a serious difference of opinion. Another limitation was that the wazir could not appoint his own successor or representative."<sup>1</sup> The second kind of wazir was a wazir with limited authority and was called Wazir-i-taufidh. He was merely an assistant to execute the orders of the sovereign. In actual practice he also wielded great power, for he was the head of administration and was entitled to control the bureaucratic machinery<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Qureshi, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

There is mention of a third kind of wazir too. Sometimes the chief noble of the court, i.e. the Amir-ul-Umara, exercised the sole power of the sovereign. The jurists, however, say that the Amir-ul-Umara had only supplanted the unlimited wazir. Khān Jahan, minister of Firoz Tughlaq is an example of the unlimited wazir, and Balban of the Amir-ul-Umara.

Among the duties and obligations of the wazir were included all the constructive functions in a broad sense. He was to supervise the finances, enrich the treasury, enlist and inspect the army and take steps to make the people prosperous, happy and contented. It was his duty also to look after and sustain men of piety and learning and protect the weak and the indigent, the widows and orphans. Finally it was his duty to organise the offices and make them efficient in their work. In short the wazir was the head of the entire machinery of the government. The wazir naturally commanded great respect and the Sultans had to show due regard for his activities and plans.

It was necessary for the wazir to be a man of high qualifications and literary attainments. To this rule there were very rare exceptions. Khan-Jahan-Maqbul, wazir of Firoz Shah, for instance, was not highly educated, still he was considered to be the wisest of men and was one of the most capable of ministers<sup>1</sup>.

*The Diwan-i-Wazarat*—The word Diwan has undergone many changes of meaning from age to age.<sup>1</sup> During the Sultanate it signified a *Department* or *Ministry*. And because the main business of the wazir was finance, the wazir's ministry or the Diwan-i-Wazarat connoted the Revenue Department. The wazir had an assistant known as *naib wazir*. Other important officials attached to the Revenue Ministry were, (1) mushrif-i-mamalik, the accountant general, and the mustaufi, who was the auditor. During the Tughlaq period the mushrif was put in charge of the income and mustaufi, of the expenditure. Next was the nazir who supervised the collections of revenue.

<sup>1</sup> Qureshi, p. 81.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

He had a large staff to assist him. Another officer, viz., *waquf* was created by Sultan Jalal-uddin Khalji, to supervise local expenditure. The latter proved so useful that his office became expanded subsequently into an important department.

There were three other chief ministries, which together with the diwan-i-wazarat were compared to the four pillars of the state. These were : the *diwan-i-risalat*, which dealt with the department of religion and charities. It was presided over by the *sadr-us-sudur*. The diwan-i-risalat was generally combined with the diwan-i-qaza or the department of justice, presided over by the chief qazi, and the two offices were also generally held by one and the same man. The second was the *diwan-i-arz*, presided over by the *ariz-i-mamalik*, who was the controller-general of the military department. The ariz had his provincial assistants, and their duties consisted in enlisting recruits, fixing their pay, inspecting the army, and disbursement of salaries to the troops. The third was the *diwan-i-insha*, which dealt with the correspondence between the sultan and the local governments, including all correspondence of a confidential nature. Questions falling directly within the purview of any particular ministry were directly sent to it. The diwan-i-insha was presided over by the *dabir-i-khas*, (also called *naib-i-diwan-i-insha*). It was also the duty of this minister to communicate the orders and wishes of the emperor to the governors and local officers and to place before him their petitions. He had to be a clever and astute man as he had to deal with all manner of situations and persons. He had a numerous staff of secretaries, assistants and clerks, all of whom were expected to be 'men of letters'.

Besides the four chief departments there were certain other departments of considerable importance. One was the department of the *barid-i-mamalik*,<sup>1</sup> who was the head of the *State Information Bureau*. Through this department the centre kept itself informed of all that was happening

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

over the empire. A network of news-agents or intelligencers were spread out in all localities, who acted both as a secret information agency and as open reporters as well. Men of tried honesty and probity were entrusted with this work. A local *barid* resided in every administrative division. This department was particularly conspicuous and indispensable during war or rebellion. Under strong and benevolent rulers this department was of great use to the people, because it reported about the doings of the local officers, and generally about all other matters concerning the welfare of the people.

*Spies*—Besides the *barid*'s department, there were a large number of spies in every place and chiefly in the houses of the nobles to report their affairs to the sultan. The agency of spies was increased to an intolerable and ridiculous excess by Ala-uddin Khalji, which made it dangerous for the nobles to talk even to relatives in their own homes or to have any kind of social intercourse whatsoever.

Another important department was the *Diwan-i-Riyasat*, which might be called the *ministry of markets* and trade. This was meant for the supervision of the markets and the dealings of the merchants and traders. It was the duty of the *Rai*'s who was the head of this department, to allow no competitive or monopoly prices to prevail. He also inspected weights and measures and kept a strict watch that the market rules were not infringed. It was his duty to prevent the merchants from cheating or exploiting the customers. He also realised the market dues.

*The Regent* (Naib-i-Mamalik)—Mention must be made of the important office of the Naib-i-Mamalik also. This office did not exist in the Persian Khilafat, being a creation of the Dihli Sultans. Ala-uddin Khalji made Malik Kafur, his Naib, that is to say, a *Deputy-King*. The Naib often enjoyed unprecedented power and privileges and the confidence of the Sultan, though no particular department was entrusted to him. But sometimes it was bestowed only as an ornamental title.

*The type of the Turkish administrative System.*—The

Government of the Sultanate has been characterised by some western scholars as of a feudal type. This is a solely mistaken view. There was nothing in the Turkish system which could be compared to that 'organised anarchy' of Mediaeval Europe which is known as the Feudal System. On the contrary the Turkish system was a highly centralised and well-organised bureaucracy, with a regular gradation of departments and officials who were all creatures of the Sultan and whose tenure of office depended solely on his will and pleasure. There was no infeudation or sub-infeudation, no post was hereditary, and the *iqtas* were transferred from one hand to another quite frequently. The governors and lower officers of the state owed allegiance to no other master except the emperor. Nor was the army feudalised. Even the armies of the *iqtadars* did not have to take any oath of fealty to any but the emperor. The Sultanate of Delhi was essentially a territorial state as understood in modern times.

*Finance.*—The Turkish rulers appreciated full well that the stability of a kingdom was based on the soundness of its finance. The Sultans imported, in this respect too, the system of taxation from the Abbaside Khilafat, and adjusted and modified it according to local conditions. The chief source of state income in India from the earliest times had been land revenue. The Muslim tax, *Kharaj*, was practically the same and gradually came to be identified with land revenue. *Kharaj* was a tax levied on the produce of land which, having been conquered by force of arms from non-Muslims, is allowed to remain in their possession and is not confiscated. If a *zimmi* bought *ushri* land (i.e., land belonging to a Muslim) it became *kharaji*. But if a Muslim bought *kharaji* land, it continued to be *kharaji*. Thus it was that both the Muslim and non-Muslim (*zimmi*) cultivators came to have *kharaji* lands, paying land revenue on its produce. According to the Muslim law the State's share ranged from ten to fifty per cent. The latter limit was reached by Ala-uddin Khalji, while it was brought down to the former level by Ghiyas Tughlaq.

*Ushr.*—This too, was a kind of land tax which was

originally realised on the Arabian territories only from the Muslims. Later some other lands also belonging to Muslims in other countries were included among the *ushri* lands. The rate of tax varied according to different conditions of irrigation, labour, etc., from ten to five per cent of the produce. *Ushr* was also charged on honey. In India some lands were declared by Qutb-uddin Aibek to be *ushri*, but they seem to have been confined to the Lahore province and were very few.

Other sources of income were: the *Jiziyah* the *Zakat*; the *Khams* or *Ghanimah*; the import duties; mines and treasure trove.

*Jiziyah* was raised from non-Muslims only and was a tax not on *property* but *per capita*, although the incidence varied according to the financial position of the payer. This distinction between the *jiziyah* and other taxes which were levied on property or income, must be primarily understood to realise the correct significance of the *jiziyah* as it was levied under the Sultanate. It was a tax imposed on *zimmis* (non-Muslims) as a price for the privilege of being allowed to live under the protection of the Muslim State, and secondly, to make the *zimmis* feel their contemptible and humiliating position. Some writers take exception to this definition of the *jiziyah*, as being completely incorrect. They say that it was a poll-tax levied only from non-Muslims as the cash-equivalent 'of the assistance which they would be liable to give if they had not persisted in their unbelief, because living as they do in the Muslim State, they must be ready to defend it.'<sup>1</sup> No one need dispute this new and healthier exposition of the principle underlying the *jiziyah*. But to say that this significance of the tax was in the mind of the Medieval Sultans and their religious mentors and that they were

<sup>1</sup>Vide Qureshi, 'p. 93. Dr. Qureshi has quoted only one sentence from Agbnides and omitted the remaining discussion of the *jiziyah* by the author of 'Muhammadan Theories of Finance'. This conveys an entirely wrong impression of the author's views as will be shown in the appendix. q. v.



actuated by such motives as the new interpretations would suggest is to fill new wine in old bottles, and would amount to nothing short of a blunt denial of their own declarations. The Sultans understood the *jiziyah* in no wise different from what Qazi Mughis explained it to mean.

Questioned by Sultan Ala-uddin concerning the position of the Hindu as a *khirajguzar*, the Qazi of Bayana expounded the injunctions of the Faith thus: "By the ecclesiastical law the term *khirajguzar* is applicable to a Hindu only, who as soon as the revenue collector demands the sum due from him, pays the same with meekness and humility, coupled with the utmost respect,.....and should the collector choose to spit into his mouth, opens the same without hesitation, so that the official may spit into it,.....*The purpose of this extreme humility on his part and the collector's spitting into his mouth, is to show the extreme sub-servience incumbent on this class, the Glory of Islam and the orthodox Faith, and the degradation of the false religion.* God almighty himself (in the Qoran) declares with regard to their being subjected to degradation.....and thus He expressly commands their complete degradation, in as much as these Hindus are the deadliest foes of the true Prophet. *Mustafa*, on whom be peace, has given orders regarding the slaying, plundering, and imprisoning of them, ordaining that they must either follow the true faith, or else be slain and imprisoned, and have all their wealth and property confiscated. With the exception of the Imam-i-A'zam (Abu Hanifa).....we have no other great divine as authority for accepting the poll tax (*jiziyah*) from a Hindu; for the opinion of the other learned men is based on the *Hadis* (Tradition) "Either death or Islam". This exposition of the Qoranic injunctions happened to square so much with the steps which the Sultan had already taken, albeit totally in ignorance of the Law, that he burst out into a laughter of approval of the Qazi's views and informed him with great gusto that 'I have established laws.....so that under the fear of my commands they would all escape into a mouse hole; and now you tell me that it is

inculcated in the Divine law that the Hindu should be made obedient and submissive in the extreme.....Rest assured, that the Hindu will never be submissive and obedient to the Musalman until he becomes de-titute and impoverished .....

There is no positive evidence to show that those non-Muslims who joined the Sultan's army were exempt from it. To levy it on women and children, or on decrepits and destitutes, would have been both inadvisable and impracticable. Moreover a number of other taxes based on the same ground were also imposed on the non-Muslims, e.g. the tax on pilgrims, the import and octroi duty on non-Muslim merchants being double that on Muslims, i.e., 5 per cent on the former and 2½ per cent on the latter. These taxes, if nothing else, do serve to show clearly that the non-Muslim subjects of the Sultans did labour under certain disabilities and did not enjoy a position of equality as citizens with the Muslims. Nor shall we be justified in finding fault with their ideas and attitude. They were the products of their own environment. But it would seem equally unnecessary to attempt to drag them to the level of our modern ideas. Neither the *Turushkdauda* of Gaharwars nor the poll-tax mentioned by Tod, were in nature akin to the *jiziyah*, in any sense. But even supposing they were, then they were no better or worse than the *jiziyah*; and the circumstances of their imposition by Hindu chiefs can in no way soften the acute implication of the *jiziyah*.

Such was the theoretical position of the *jiziyah*, but it is very probable that the acuteness of it might have been greatly tempered in actual practice.

The *jiziyah* was levied on all non-Muslim subjects (*zimmis*) excepting the Brahmans, who did not forget to claim a privileged position even here. Firoz Shah Tuqlaq was perfectly justified and logical in removing this unjust distinction, because the Islamic Law did not give any privileges to Brahmans. Their protests only show that they acutely felt the loss of a privilege which they had always selfishly enjoyed. The *zimmis* were divided into three

classes according to their financial position. The poorest class paid one dinar, the middle two dinars, and the richest four dinars, per head per annum.

*Zakat.*—Zakat is classed as a religious tax which was realised from the well-to-do Muslims only, the object being to support and maintain the poor and needy Musalmans from its proceeds. It was payable on wealth in the shape of treasures or herds of cattle or merchandise etc., the share of the state being  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

*Khams.*—Khams or Ghanimah consists of the spoils of war. Legally one-fifth of the war booty and one or two articles especially selected by the Sultan, were the share of government, and the rest must be distributed to the army. But this rule was seldom obeyed by the Sultans who tried to monopolise as much as they could.

*Import duties* have already been referred to above.

As regards mines and treasure-trove, the jurists greatly differ as to the state share of the find. The Hanafi school makes it  $\frac{1}{5}$ th, the Shafite nil, and the Maliki hold that zakat should be paid on it.

Heirless property left by a man dying intestate also belonged to the state.

*The Army.*—The army was controll'ed and managed by the Ministry of War or Diwan-i-arz; The Ariz-i-Mamalik was the head of this department. The various duties pertaining to the army, such as recruitment, branding (*dagh*) when it was introduced keeping a descriptive roll, (*huliya*), payment of salaries, inspection of the troops etc., were all within his jurisdiction and responsibility. From a statement of Zia Barani that Ala-uddin Khaljis court poets received their salaries from the army department it would appear that all salaries were disbursed through the 'Ariz. 'If so one can see the beginnings in this custom of the Mughal custom of putting all public servants on the army pay-list and giving them mansabs'<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Qureshi, p. 132.

The distribution of the army was made according to the needs of different provinces and localities. The means of communication being slow and the revolts frequent, sufficient forces were maintained by the provincial heads and even by the lower executives. But special care had to be taken of the north-west frontier. A series of fortresses were built and old ones kept in good repair and all these were equipped with the best garrison and commanded by the ablest and most experienced warriors. These wardens of the marches had the most perilous and important responsibility from the menace of Mughal invasions which had become very frequent in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The main arm and the backbone of the army was cavalry. The Sultans made constant improvements in the efficiency of the cavalry. They were expected to be equipped to a specified standard in the matter of arms and horses. The troopers were of three kinds; *murattab*, i.e., with no horse, yak aspah, with one horse and du aspah, with two horses.

The elephant corps formed the next effective element of the army. They were used both for transport of heavy baggage as well as for fighting in which they served almost the same purpose as the tanks in modern warfare. The supply of elephants was mainly drawn from Bengal. The elephant corps was commanded by the *Shahna-i-fil*.

*Infantry*.—The infantry (payaks) consisted of men of humbler origin and the Hindus. Some of them served as body-guards, but the majority were utilised for various menial services, as watchmen, door-keepers, attendants. Sometimes they took part in battles also. But they bore arms like the sword, the bow and arrow etc.

*Firearms*.—Some sort of firearms were also in use. Combustibles like naphtha and rockets were used specially during sieges. The use of such weapons, however, remained in a very rudimentary stage under the Sultanate. But quite ingenious devices, like catapults (*manjanig*), were used to hurl heavy iron or stone balls and inflammable material into the forts. The catapults consisted of two posts pitched

at a short distance with a horizontal bar on which a long bamboo was swung and the ball was kept in a noose attached to the lower end of the bamboo. This was then swung hard and then let go so that the ball was hurled with great force.

*Organisation.*—The army was organised on the Turkish model as imported and modified in Persia by the Ghaznavids. The Turkish army was divided into *tumans*. Each *tuman* comprised ten or twelve thousand troopers. This was further elaborated by Changiz Khan. In the army of the Sultans the largest force commanded by a single commander was 10,000, and its leader held the title of *khan*. A Khan commanded ten *maliks*, each of whom commanded 1,000 men or more. Under the *malik* were ten *amirs* and under him *sipah-salar* and then the *sar-i-khail*; the latter having had only ten horsemen under him.

*Justice, Religious Supervision and Police.* It has been pointed out above that the departments of justice and religion and charities were combined and placed in charge of a single minister who was Sadr-us-sudur as well as Qazi-i-mamalik. But the emperor was above them all and the final court of appeal in all matters. Jurists have divided the judicial functions of the Sultan under three sub-departments: the Diwan-i-mazalim, which was meant to hear complaints against public servants; the Diwan-i-qaza through which justice was dispensed in cases of dispute among the subjects of the State and a Qaza-i-askar, which dealt with the disputes or unlawful actions of the members of the army. In the case of civil disputes, the cases would first go to the court of the local qazi and then to the next higher qazi, and if necessary they could finally be taken to the chief-qazi's and the Sultan's court.

An important judicial officer was also the Amir-i-dad who presided over the Diwan-i-mazalim in the absence of the emperor. In the presence of the emperor he carried out the decisions of the court. His duty was to execute the business of the judicial department. He is said to have been responsible also for the upkeep of

public buildings, such as mosques, gates, city walls, bridges. The kotwal and the muhtasib were under him.

*Procedure*—Appeals from local qazis were taken to the chief qazi, but they could be taken direct to the Sultan over the qazi's head. There is no mention in the chronicles of any definite procedure. But appeals were allowed only rarely. Indeed few occasions would have arisen for appeals, because most of the litigation was disposed of by the village panchayats. It must be said to the credit of the Sultans that they approved the village panchayats realising as they did the great antiquity as well as utility of the institution.

In civil cases and administrative matters there was no difficulty. If the parties were both Muslim, the case was decided according to the *Shari'at*, but if they were Hindus, Hindu customary law was also consulted. 'Cases between Muslim and non-Muslim litigants were decided according to principles of equity,' in the opinion of Qureshi. But no definite data regarding such cases are available.

In the matter of Criminal Law, the state had to override the predilections of the qazis and to make such rules as would cover those cases for which the Qoranic laws were found to be inadequate.

*The Religious Department*—An important department under the Sultanate was that of the Muhtasib, after the manner of the Abbaside *Khilafat*. The duties of this officer were very wide and were concerned with the supervision and preservation of the general religious and civic morals of men. For instance, he was not only to compel the Muslims to observe the five daily prayers and other practices enjoined by the Law, but also to see that the people behaved in such a manner as not to cause any kind of injury or annoyance either to men or even animals. He could punish dishonest merchants and people who obstructed the streets or committed nuisance, or over-loaded their cattle and so on and so forth.

*The Police*—The policing of the cities was entrusted to Kotwals. The Kotwal corresponded roughly to the Sahib-i-Shurta of the *Khilafat*. His duty was to guard the city wall

and he had the keys of the city gates. The city was divided into a number of wards each being placed under the watch of a leading man of the same ward. The kotwal's exercised some magisterial powers also.

It is, however, not clear how the countryside was protected and guarded. Probably it was left to the local village authorities to look after.

There was an Amir-i-Bahr also to supervise a small flotilla of boats on the rivers. Another minor department dealt with agriculture, the officer-in-charge being called *Amir-i-Kho*. He dealt with schemes of agricultural improvement which was always the chief concern of the state.

*Quote instance from Elliot IV. 453.*

### C. Structure and working of the Government :

#### PROVINCIAL

No specific account of the administrative divisions of the empire of Delhi is given in the chronicles of the period. Indeed no definite distribution of provinces and their divisions was possible for some time. The various Turkish warriors who had conquered parts of the country were recognised as governors thereof and entrusted with the duty of maintaining peace and collecting revenue by their own resources. Some sort of an organisation seems to have been attempted by Altamash and then by Balban, but we have no means to know any details about it. One thing, however is certain, that the extent of the central control over the local governors varied according to two conditions, viz. the strength and ability of the Sultan, and the distance of the province from the centre. The governors were ambitious military leaders who always aspired to become independent as soon as the central power grew weak. Hence they had to be forced to submit time and again. Under Ala-uddin Khalji the conquest of the land was made to its furthest limits, but still the whole of the southern provinces were held in the loosest subjection. Under Muhammad Tughlaq when the empire reached its

widest extent we have a definite mention of twenty-three provinces.

Governors were called by various names, of which *wali* and *muqti* were the most common. The Wali seems to have enjoyed a higher status and authority than the Muqti.<sup>1</sup> The governors were more or less autonomous within their jurisdictions and were not interfered with so long as they owed allegiance and paid regular tribute to the Sultan. The government of the Sultans was in nature a rule by a military camp and the governors were all military men. Their primary duty was to help in the collection of revenue and to propagate the Faith. They were also expected to assist in but not interfere with the administration of justice and in the religious affairs.

The army maintained by the governors was subject to control and inspection by the provincial Ariz who was responsible to the Central Government.

For keeping the local revenue records and submitting them to the Wazir, an expert accountant was appointed in each province who was called Sahib-i-Diwan. In theory he was subordinate to the governor but as he was appointed directly by the Sultan he constituted a great check on the governor.

*Shiqq and parganah*—The division of the provinces (Iqta', Wilayat) was effected not earlier than the 14th century. Under Muhammad Tughlaq there are definite indications of the existence of Shiqqs as sub-divisions of provinces. In the confusion following Firoz Shah's reign the Shiqq seems to have disappeared, but emerged again under the Lodis as the name of certain territorial divisions under the new name of *sarkars*. The precursor of the parganah was the *qasba* which indicated a group of a few villages. Several such groups comprised a sarkar and were in course of time called parganahs. The head of the sarkar was called shiqqdar-i-shiqqdar and that of the parganah, shiqqdar. Among

<sup>1</sup> Moreland and Qureshi both have expressed the same opinion in this connection. Qureshi, p. 186: Moreland, Agr. System, Appendix B.



other officials of the Sarkar, faujdar is mentioned, and of the parganah, the names of chowdhry, qanungo and mutasarrif.

*Means of communication and transport*—Upto the time of the Khaljis whatever means of communication and transport were constructed were meant primarily for state purposes. A sound and quick postal system as well as a spy system, was a fundamental necessity, particularly for the security and stability of a military state like that of the Turks. Their postal system was borrowed from the Romans (see appendix). It was an efficient system and served well its object of keeping the provinces in close touch with the centre. Post was carried by two different agencies; by men runners called *dhawahs* and by horses. At short intervals of a mile or two relays of men and horses were stationed. Light post consisting of letters, despatches and sometimes light baggage was carried by the runner in a bag in one hand and in the other he carried a pole to the top of which were attached a bunch of jingling bells. The *dhawah* ran at full speed and passed his bag on to the man at the next station, who kept himself in readiness, so that the movement was continuous without a break. This transport was quicker than the horse transport, because the horses had to be unyoked at every stage and the relay put in. But the horse dak carried heavier luggage including fruits and parcels etc. Sometimes even men were carried in litters by a sort of relay system. Ganges water is said to have been carried for Muhammad Tughlaq upto Deogiri. Muhammad Tughlaq organised another ingenious system of transmission of news with great speed. Between large towns a series of large kettle-drums were placed at some intervals. Whenever some incident of importance occurred in any distant part the drums were beaten and when the sound reached the next station the drums of that place were beaten. Thus in a short time the whole chain relayed the sound and the news was transmitted to the Sultan very quickly. Possibly some sort of signalling system was used.

All this system was, however, meant only for the service of the state and was not used by private persons. The news-

reporters distributed over the empire were called *Barids*.

Besides the open system of news-reporters there was a parallel system of spies who kept the centre informed of all local happenings and chiefly about the activities of officials.

*Resume of the achievements of the Sultans*—The vast country-wide empire of Muhammad Tughlaq had already dwindled down to less than half its extent before the eyes of that redoubtable emperor himself. Firoz did nothing to recover it. On the other hand the policy of Firoz left the structure of the empire in a rickety condition and within a few years of his death the whole edifice crumbled down with a crash. No recovery was possible on the lines on which the policy of the kingdom had been moulded by its rulers. The Lodi system suffered from certain intestine and chronic weaknesses which were past cure, besides the basic shortcomings of the Turkish experiment. A new remedy, a fresh and robust outlook, a free, untrammelled view point, were necessary to effect a revival. The seeds for such a growth were laid by Sher Shah and they fructified and blossomed forth to the fullest extent in the congenial soil of the benign and dynamic regime of Akbar.

Thus in the socio-political sphere the achievements of the Delhi Sultans were poor. The three main problems with which they were confronted remained more or less unsolved. The frontier situation remained substantially as it was at the commencement of their rule. The Gakkhars remained unplacated and unbefriended as ever. Nor was the internal security carried to a sounder stage. In the sphere of administrative reconstruction too, no enduring institutions such as might survive the shocks of revolutions were built up. The local institutions of which the sub-structure persisted through all sorts of upheavals were deeply rooted in the soil of the land. They survived because of their native stability.

Then in the matter of building up a country-wide empire, they did succeed for some time in bringing the whole land under the sway of their flag, but while the distant parts of it were never brought under a centralised control, even the

nearer ones did not attain any appreciable degree of solidarity.

Lastly the traditions and policies followed by the Sultans on the whole were far from being worthy of serving as an example and a beacon-light to show the path to their successors.

The achievements of the Sultans in the domain of art, especially architecture and a certain class of literature were far more appreciable and lasting. But this subject is outside the purview of this work.

## CHAPTER III

### POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS PRIOR TO AKBAR

#### I—FROM BABAR TO HUMAYUN (1526—1556)

*Introductory*—In the previous chapter we have attempted to sketch the administrative experiments and to estimate the achievements of the Sultans of Dihli. The political institutions bequeathed by them have been examined and elucidated. But in order to comprehend the problems and the achievements of their successors it is essential to acquaint ourselves also with the new background of the socio-political texture of the 16th century northern India on which the picture of the following institutions had to develop. Again to estimate the value of the work of the successive actors on the subsequent stage of our history it is equally important to know their respective antecedents, and the circumstances of their birth and breeding.

Timur had set an example of great imperialistic ambitions realised in extensive conquests. But of his vast empire, only Transoxiana, the bulk of Afghanistan, and part of Khorasan and Persia were all that remained in the possession of his successors. The greater part of the central Asian countries which had been subjugated by Timur were divided between the Uzbeks and the Safavis who had newly established their power. No one among the Mirzas (as the Timurid princes are known to Muslim historians) was capable of consolidating the portion of the Amir's kingdom that each had inherited. Even that was divided among several cousins who ruled independently their respective shares. None of them evinced any genius for adventure or ambition for conquest. The instinct for great adventure had become dormant in the Timurid stock, as Denison Ross points out, until it was re-awakened in Babar.

Babar therefore had a great struggle to go through if

he wanted to gratify his ambition. Orphaned and left to his own resources at the very young age of eleven, he had continuously to struggle against his cousins for the next twenty years in order to establish his kingdom at Samarkand, a city for which Babar had as much love as his ancestor Timur. The political situation of Central Asia, however, so conspired against him—the rise of the Uzbeks in Khwarizmia and their expansion towards Transoxiana, the rise of the Safavids in Khorasan and Persia, combined with the weakness of his kinsmen—that it rendered the realisation of his dream impossible. He found shelter in Kabul which for some time became the base and centre of his activities, chiefly after 1512 when he was defeated by the Uzbeks at the battle of Ghazdawan. Babar's ambition was, however, unquenchable. He was not the man to give in to an unfavourable destiny and succumb to its seeming verdict. He must find some other regions to gratify his lust for conquest and empire. Unlike Timur Babar's resources were limited, and the Safavids in the west and Uzbeks in the north had not only left no chance for his adventures in those directions but their existence had made his position in Afghanistan extremely precarious. The only region which lay open for attack was Hindustan, rendered defenceless owing to the mutual bickerings and the incapacity of its chiefs. It was this coincidence of a peculiar political situation in Central Asia and Hindustan which almost compelled Babar to seek the gratification of his dreams in Hindustan.

But while the situation in India was favourable for an invader from the north-west, it was not so for the establishment of a stable kingdom. A number of hostile sections had to be overpowered, and many mutually discordant and antagonistic elements to be reconciled in order to build up a secure and enduring political structure. The Hindu chieftains of Rajputana, headed by the stalwart Rana of Chittor, the Muslim rulers of Gujrat and Malwa, and the Afghan warriors and free-lances in the east, had all to be reckoned with.

Thus on the eve of the advent of Babar the whole country presented the spectacle of a congeries of kingdoms of varying magnitudes and resources. The most noteworthy though tragic trait of the character of these kingdoms was that while they were all, Hindu and Muslim alike, imbued with patriotic sentiments and were anxious to save the land from falling under the sway of any foreigner, their individual ambitions and interests proved stronger than their patriotic feelings and marred the chances of a concerted action against the invaders. Most of them aspired to the throne of Dihli, but at least two or three of them, the most conspicuous being Rana Sanga, went to the extent of inviting Babar to invade the country in the hope of securing by his assistance the kingdom of Dihli. The Afghan and Hindu chiefs both realised too late the supreme folly of inviting an outsider to settle their accounts, and tried to effect a union but it was all in vain. On the other hand the national consciousness of the Afghan chiefs of the eastern provinces and of Rana Sanga, which was made keener by the loss of Dihli and Agra, presented the most serious difficulty in securing a firm foothold in his newly acquired kingdom and eventually succeeded in hounding the unwary Humayun out of the country. There is a remarkable contrast between the manner in which the whole country was swept from west to east by the Ghurian adventurers in the first decade of the 13th century, and that in which Babar and his successors had to fight almost every inch of ground to acquire it. This contrast becomes all the more conspicuous by the fact that in the former case the native chiefs from whose hands the country had been wrested by the invaders either vanished or retired quietly into some obscure corner never making any attempt to recover their lost freedom while in the 16th century the former rulers of the land maintained the struggle for freedom for at least one generation until the new conqueror took the wind out of their sails by becoming himself more Indianised and nationalised than themselves. It was this circumstance which made the conquest of the country by the Mughals much slower than the precipitate

manner in which it fell into the hands of the Turkish warriors in the 13th century. So when Babar and Humayun entered the arena and snatched the prize of India's crown from the rival claimants, they found themselves surrounded by a host of enemies who were not prepared to submit quietly to their new masters. It was on the background of such a political situation that Babar had to build up his administrative structure while Humayun had hardly any time from his distractions and troubles to do anything worth the name in the way of reconstruction, although theoretically he seems to have planned much.

*Political divisions of Hindustan before Babar*—Northern India on the eve of the Mughal conquest was, as has been said above, split into a number of kingdoms varying in extent and power. The remnant of the Dihli Sultanate was only one of these, having lost all her former prowess and predominance. Some of these kingdoms became the nuclei of the future provinces of the Mughal Empire.

These kingdoms fall into four well-defined groups. Fortified within the Himalayan valleys there was a ring of chiefships which, until the Mughal conquest, remained entirely unaffected by the politics of Hindustan. The foremost of them was Kashmir whose political boundaries were clearly and unchangeably defined by nature. East of Kashmir there was a series of smaller chiefships which remained autonomous even during the Mughal period.

South of this region the plains of Hindustan, excluding Rajputana, were parcelled out into several Muslim kingdoms. Commencing from Multan in the extreme west and making a north-easterly curve, this group comprised Lahore, north-east of Multan, practically independent; then south-east of Lahore, the remnant of the Sultanate, and to the east thereof Behar and Bengal. Along the southern border of the plains of Hindustan lay the kingdoms of Khandesh, Gujrat and Malwa, besides the minor principalities of the hilly region of central India known as Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand. Between these two belts of Muslim kingdoms, on the west, stretched the wide expanse

of Rajputana like a wedge, as it were, itself broken up into several chiefships, but rallying round the leadership of the house of Chittor which had at that time risen to the premier position among them. One very far-reaching result of this peculiar situation of the Rajput states was that their rivalry with the kingdoms of Malwa and Gujrat saved the effete Empire of Dihli from being swallowed up by either of them and thus gave it a lease of life longer than it deserved.

It is not possible to specify the precise extent of these kingdoms because their boundaries were perpetually changing. -The provinces of Multan and Lahore were practically independent. The former consisted roughly of a long narrow strip of land along the eastern bank of the Indus, stretching from its mouth northwards to a little above the city of Multan, as far as the frontier of the Gakkhar land. On the south-east it was bounded by Rajputana and on the north-east by Lahore. The province of Lahore was bounded on the west by the Jehlum and on the east by the Satlaj. On its north lay Kashmir and on the south Rajputana. Next to Lahore was the territory of the Lodi Sultans. They had failed to exercise more than a nominal control over Lahore, but Bahlol had succeeded, after a prolonged contest, in re-annexing the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur extending as far as Bihar. Sikandar extended it further by subjugating Bihar in the east and annexing Marwar, Bayana, Chanderi, Dholpur, Raisen and Nagor in the west. To this Gwalior was added by Ibrāhim who conquered it after the death of its ruler Mansingh. This was, however, the culminating point in the expansion of the Lodi dominions. The centrifugal tendencies were already in evidence. Ibrahim was involved in dealing with the recalcitrance of his nobles for the rest of his life. But the general revolt of the nobles which broke out at this time against Ibrahim was the result of his own unreasonable suspicions and tyranny. As a result of his baselessly suspecting Azam-i-Humayun Shirwani and throwing him and his son Fath Khan into prison, Islam Khan, another son of Azam Humayun rebelled in Agra and defended his property. On this two nobles Sai'd Khan and Azam-i-Humayun Lodi, deserted the Sultan and marched



to Lucknow and sent to Islam Khan full assurance of their support. The Sultan instead of placating the disaffected nobles, spurned their demand of the release of Azam Humayun Shirwani as the price of their return to allegiance, and attacked them, killing Islam Khan and taking Sai'd Khan prisoner. But this temporary triumph, far from restoring peace, was the signal for a fresh outburst of revolt. Darya Khan Lohani of Bihar, Khan Jahan Lodi and Mian Husain Qarmali and others raised the standard of rebellion. As if to fan the flame of their resentment Ibrahim committed the folly of procuring the assassination of Shaikh Hasan Qarmali, governor of Chanderi, who was a relation of Husain Qarmali. Darya Khan Lohani having died was succeeded by his son Bahadur Khan who proclaimed himself king in his father's fief of Bihar, and collecting an army of 100,000 horse occupied the country as far as Sambhal. Another relation of his, Nazir Khan Lohani made himself independent in Ghazipur and assumed the title of Muhammad Shah.

It was in the midst of this chaos that Ghazi Khan, son of Daulat Khan, governor of Lahore, visited Agra and returned with such disgust and suspicion against Ibrahim that he advised his father to seek Babar's assistance for his safety. Such was the condition of the kingdom of Dihli under Ibrahim.

As regards the boundaries of the centrally situated provinces of the Sultanate, such as Sambhal, Badaun, Itawah, Agra, they are difficult to know with any degree of accuracy, but they seem to have generally followed the line of the rivers. Next to Dihli was the kingdom of Bengal which had maintained its independence ever since 1338 A. D., when Fakhr-uddin the Silahdar (armour-bearer) of the governor of Sunargaon, after his master's death, killed the governor of Lakhnauti and subduing the provinces of Sunargaon, Lakhnauti and Satgaon, combined them into one independent kingdom under his rule.

Rajputana was practically free from Lodi control. South

of Rajputana the powerful kingdoms of Gujrat and Malwa were constantly at war with each other or with Chittor. Their boundaries, though fairly well defined by geography, were never quite steady. Both these Muslim kingdoms had become independent towards the end of the 14th century. In the middle of the 15th century Mahmud Khalji of Malwa greatly extended his dominions and in 1440, marched upon Dihli itself, but was repulsed by Bahlol. At a later period, the possessions of Malwa extended as far as Kalpi in the north, which remained for two generations a bone of contention between it and Jaunpur. Eventually in 1531 Malwa was absorbed by Gujrat. After this it rapidly changed hands until its conquest by Akbar in 1561, from Baz Bahadur, son of Shuja'at Khan, who was governor of that province under Sher Shah.

The rulers of Gujrat were abler and more powerful than those of Malwa. They made extensive conquests and imposed their suzerainty over many neighbouring territories. At one time their sway extended from Mandu and Dhar to the peninsula of Kathiawar, and from Chittor to *Diu*. The kings of Khandesh and the *Rais* of Junagarh and Girnar were tributaries to them. The zenith of Gujrat's ascendancy was reached when in 1531 Malwa was annexed to it. But this unprecedented glory was very short-lived, and within a few years decline and decay set in. The successors of Bahadur Shah III (1526-'36) were weaklings under whom the kingdom fell rapidly into a state of chaos, and became the prey of rival factions until its annexation by Akbar in 1573.

The kingdom of Orissa which, after its conquest by Raja Man Singh in 1592, was joined to Bengal, was a part of the ancient kingdom of Kalinga. On its north-east was Bengal and on the south-west the kingdom of Golconda. On the western side it was bounded by the table-land of Chhota-Nagpur and Gondwana which stretched right into Central India.

*The Extent of Babar's Kingdom.*—The dominions of



the furthest points of his conquests in that direction. The southern part of Bihar and the country beyond remained independent in the hands of Afghan and Hindu chieftains.

After Babar Malwa and Gujrat were conquered by the languid and dilatory Humayun in 1535, only to lose them again within a few months.

*Political Divisions under Babar and Humayun.*—Concerning the political divisions of the kingdom under Babar and Humayun we have no definite information. From the memoirs we learn that there were thirty sarkars and zamindaris (i.e. the territories of the tributary chiefs) under him extending from Jehlum to Bihar. Babar had neither time nor enough acquaintance with the institutions of his new kingdom to be able to make any alterations or improvements in the system of government.

It is a very common, though thoroughly irrational and unscientific practice among students of Indian history to try to compare Babar with Sher Shah as an administrator. But it is not realised by these scholars that such a comparison is as irrelevant as it is unfair. Sher Shah was ten years' senior in age to Babar and moreover being an Indian and had all his life been a witness to the ins and outs of its administrative system and its politics. Babar on the other hand was a foreigner, having no acquaintance with the institutions of this land. It is therefore quite unfair to compare the two as administrators.

Humayun wasted all opportunity of constructive work by his own imprudent methods of dealing with the complicated situation with which he was faced. Therefore it may be presumed that the political organisation of their predecessors was kept up unaltered by the first two Mughal rulers. Babar puts his whole dominions under two categories: the crown territories or regular sarkars, and the territories or states of those chiefs, or Rais and zamindars, who had acknowledged his overlordship. These zamindaris comprised about one-fifth of the whole kingdom. Out of the

total revenue amounting to 52 crores<sup>1</sup>, parganahs to the value of about eight or nine crores were in the possession of the Rajas and Rais who were left in enjoyment of internal autonomy provided they paid regular tribute and remained loyal. The crown territories were assigned to his followers whose obligation was to carry on the administration with the assistance of old government functionaries, to realise revenues and transmit them to the central treasury and to maintain a force according to their respective status, to come to help the sovereign whenever called upon. These assignments were, however, not hereditary. The assignees were frequently transferred. There was another class of assignments known as *Suyurghal* (later also called *Madad-i-ma'ash*) which were conferred for religious, charitable and educational purposes by way of maintenance upon individuals as well as institutions. These were free from all obligations of either payment or military service. But if found to be abused they could be withdrawn.

*Revenue*—The revenues of Babar and Humayun were mainly derived from land-tax. But there were some other sources of income also. A customs duty was levied on the frontier, on all imports from outside. This was called *tamgha* (stamp) because a stamp was put on cattle or goods on which duty had been paid. There were also transit duties on merchandise transported from one part of the country to another. A fourth tax was levied on shop-keepers, especially in towns. Lastly the *Jeziyah* was imposed on non-muslims in those territories where the King's control was firmly established.

*Communications*—An important and useful measure of Babar was the organisation of regular road and postal communications. He was the first ruler to order all his marches,

<sup>1</sup> Neither the actual coins referred to here nor their value can be estimated with certainty. Erskine has calculated that the 52 crores of Babar's revenue was equal to £4,212,000. But the current coins in the time of Babar were the *Tanka* and *Dam*.

including ordinary journeys and excursions, to be regularly measured, an operation which must have tended to improve the geography and roads of a country then very imperfectly surveyed. He also established a series of post-houses from Agra to Kabul, at intervals of about fifteen miles, and stationed relays of six horses and proper officers at each.<sup>1</sup>

It need scarcely be mentioned that the army of Babar consisted mainly of cavalry recruited from among the Turks, Mughals, and later on, Hazaras of the Afghan country. They were recruited by the military leaders who attached themselves to the king from various considerations of family or gratitude or hope of gain and fortune. Every leader had his standard which indicated his rank, the highest standard being called *tugh*. This was surmounted by the flowing tail of the mountain cow, an object of great ambition and granted only to a few. Besides these some Indian chiefs had gone over to Babar's side when he very cleverly declared himself Ghazi and his war against Rana Sanga, a jihad against an infidel.

But Babar's artillery was the most important and unique constituent of his army and was of immense use to him in his wars against the Indian chiefs who possessed nothing like it.

*Justice* under Babar must have fallen more or less completely into the hands of local bodies, (the village panchayats), during the confusion following the decline of the Surs. But it may be presumed that cases of importance would have been taken to the governor or even the king for decision. In the restoration of peace and security of life and property, Babar showed great vigilance and severity. In the Punjab the Jat and Gujar freebooters of the hills had become a terror. They infested the country, plundered and killed the

<sup>1</sup>Ferishta (Briggs, II. pp. 66 67) mentions that Babar changed the Sikandari Gaz, and that the Babari Gaz continued in use till the beginning of Jehangir's reign. This seems to be a mistake as the Sikandari Gaz continued down to Akbar's time when it was standardised like other measurements.

people. Babar caught many of them and cut them to pieces to make an example for others. This had a quieting effect on the miscreants. Similarly he dealt with Mohan Mundahir, who had looted and burnt the property of the Qazi of Samana most ruthlessly. Thousands of Mundahirs were slaughtered and their colony utterly devastated so that it never rose again.

*Public Works*—Babar was a great lover of building pleasancess, such as gardens, baths, tanks, wells and fountains. He also erected a number of mosques. In Agra alone 680 masons and craftsmen were employed on his buildings, and in Sikri, Dholpur, Biana, Koel and Gwalior, 1491 stonecutters. Very few of his buildings have, however, survived.

*Character of Babar's Government*—We have noticed above that Babar and Humayun had no option but to adopt and continue the mechanism of government which they found in the land. Moreover the policy of the Lodi Sultans had not left any healthy traditions or precedents. On the other hand Babar, both by training and culture as well as by his native genius, was a most enlightened and liberal prince. The whole of his life is one long evidence of the fact that he was actuated, and consciously actuated, by considerations of personal ambition rather than by religious motives. Of course he was not above making the fullest capital out of a show of religious bigotry whenever it suited him and served his end, just as he did by assuming the roll of *Ghazi* and by declaring it as a holy war when he had to fight against Rana Sanga. The same motive could make him abjure the Sunni faith and don the Shia Qizilbash cap without any qualms of conscience. On the other hand he refused to persecute the Sunnis at the command of the Shia ruler of Persia whom he had for political reasons accepted as his suzerain. His erecting a tower of the heads of Hindus (pagans) and kindred professions and actions, during his wars with Hindu chiefs were obviously measures born of diplomacy. By no stretch of imagination they can be ascribed to religious fanaticism. No one can accuse him of religious narrow-mindedness if he repaired

and restored those mosques at Chandèri, Ranthambhor, Raisin and Sarangpur, which had been converted into cattle-sheds by Medni Rai's orders. Rather it is amazing that the insult which had been inflicted upon the mosques did not inflame Babar to take revenge upon the Hindus by demolishing their temples. We hear of no such act of violence or reprisal. It is not at all difficult to appreciate that by contenting himself simply with repairing the defiled mosques, and doing no injury to the sacred places of the Hindus Babar exhibited a most remarkable and praiseworthy generosity of mind, altogether rare in that age. In normal times we have no evidence of any acts of intolerance or persecution. Hence the Bhopal document<sup>1</sup> which is supposed to contain the text of the last will of Babar in which the dying emperor exhorts his son to keep his mind free from religious prejudices and to treat all his subjects justly, and not to kill the cows, etc. etc., does not seem to exaggerate the spirit of Babar even though its authenticity may be seriously doubted by some scholars. A few sporadic and scattered instances of temple destruction by his officers who could not be expected to possess his cultured and liberal outlook, cannot be set down as proofs of Babar's bigotry<sup>2</sup>.

Thus it would seem undeniable that although the old machinery of government had to be retained a definite attempt was made by the Turkish conqueror to infuse into it a new spirit and to initiate fresh traditions and a progressive and broad-minded policy.

*Character of the new Sovereignty.*—This fundamental change in the policy and religious attitude of the monarchs took place side by side with another change which was even more profound and significant. This was manifested by

<sup>1</sup> Vide Indian Review, August 1923, and Twentieth Century, January 1936, pp. 339—'44.

<sup>2</sup> Such instances of temple destruction by Babar's officers as are reproduced by Prof. S. R. Sharma, in his 'Religious Policies of the Mughals', are based on later and not contemporary authorities.



the revolution which came about in the conception of sovereignty within a quarter century. The Turkish Sultans never succeeded in establishing even by convention a fixed law of succession. In the early stages, there was a perpetual tug of war between the principle of election by the tribal aristocracy and the principle of hereditary succession and the latter tended to become gradually stronger. But still the sovereignty was not supposed to be the exclusive or indefeasible right of any one family or dynasty. It was still the prey of the strongest sword, whoever might wield it. But under the Lodis the basis of monarchy became the weakest and most shaky, resting as it did on the Afghan custom of the kingdom being considered as tribal property and the king being only the leader or the headman, as it were, in a community of equals. The monarchy of the Lodis has been rightly described by Rushbrooke Williams as a 'human compromise and not a divine inheritance, with the result that the power and prestige of the monarch were alike diminished.' It was a hegemony wielded by the leading chiefs of the tribe, who were all equals in power, if not in prestige and influence. They could never concede to the Sultan a supreme and indisputable position. Indeed the secret of Bahlol Lodi's success in maintaining himself was his full and frank recognition of the claim to equality of the tribal leaders on whose support he had to rely. Herein lay the essential weakness of the Lodi Monarchy. Sikandar Lodi showed some strength but had to bow to the time-honoured traditions of his community. Ibrahim tactlessly defied this cherished tradition and found himself in deep waters.

Under such a system the hold of the centre on the provincial and local administrators was bound to be very lax. It was limited only to the right to demand a certain quota of men in times of war. For the rest they were, more or less, miniature kings, within their respective jurisdictions and were apt to reckon their jagirs as hereditary whenever the central authority became too weak to enforce its will upon them. The central executive was thus completely paralysed; the elements of cohesion

which kept the local administrators bound to the sovereign were rendered entirely nugatory. Besides the levy of armed men they could perhaps also demand a money contribution. But they had to be on their guard against offending the tribal magnates whose support was essential for their very existence. The administrative mechanism constructed by the Khaljis and Tughlaqs had crumbled to ruins never to be revived until the advent of Sher Shah. It appears, however, that the masses of the people remained, on the whole, unperturbed and unconcerned despite the political convulsions and consequent chaos prevailing for more than a century and a half. The Muslim rulers had wisely left the ancient local institutions of the country uninterfered with.

The above-mentioned conception of monarchy had to yield to the altered political conditions and to undergo a radical transformation. The Timurid tradition had established the principle that monarchy was a divine delegation and therefore unquestionable and sacred. The sovereignty thus became the monopoly of a single dynasty in definite contrast with the sovereignty of the Sultanate which was not sheltered from being claimed by any and every body by any such restriction. The Mughal sovereignty conferred upon the ruler a position of absolute and unquestionable authority which, excepting the members of the royal family, no one else could claim. According to this principle the person of the monarch was sacrosanct, hampered by no limitations like the Lodi monarchy and placed by Divine right on a position of such towering eminence that even the highest chiefs and amirs could never presume or venture to aspire to it. It may, however, be noticed in passing that the process of defining and stabilising the principle of sovereignty had not yet attained full maturity. No definite principle such as the law of primogeniture ever came to be recognised even among the Mughals. This was the cause of the disastrous wars of succession among the sons of the dying or the deceased king on every such occasion. However that may be, for the acceptance of such an indisputable monarchy a radical

change in the popular mind was needed. Babar had conquered Hindustan. That was comparatively easy. But now he was confronted with the more difficult problem of making the chiefs and nobles reconcile themselves to the new ideal of sovereignty under which their privileges and status were alike to be degraded to a far inferior level. They were now to be unquestioning and obedient servants of an absolute sovereign and not his peers. It was no easy task to achieve such a revolution in the politics of the country. A great effort, an overhauling of the entire ramshackle mechanism of the Afghan government which was altogether unsuited and far too inadequate to achieve the above ideal, was required. Far greater than even this was the need of bringing about a change in the psychology of the people, as has been already pointed out.

Two fundamental points needed to be attacked primarily. The Afghan chiefs claimed a share both in the territories as well as the powers and authority of the sovereign reducing their polity to a sort of joint stock company of the tribe. In consequence of which whenever any new territory was acquired the Sultan had to invite the members of the tribe to receive their respective shares thereof. The rebellious propensities of the provincial chiefs were encouraged by the rickety and outworn structure of the government. Thus the task of the future ruler was twofold. He had to pull down what might be called an organised anarchy, somewhat resembling that of the Rajputs, minus its virtues and strong points, and to replace it by a centralised and compact monarchy by concentrating the elements of power and making the sovereign the source of all authority. It was necessary for him to wipe out the age-long superstition jealously cherished by the Afghans that the kingdom was communal property, and that every member of the community could claim in it a share as a matter of indefeasible title. In order to assert and vindicate the new ideal of monarchy it was further necessary for the future sovereign to make the chiefs and amirs forget their erstwhile notions of equality with the Sultan, and to acquiesce in a position of unquestioning obedience.

Next it was necessary, with a view to achieving the above object, to reorganise and consolidate the administrative machinery. A renovated and rejuvenated system of government was needed not only to ensure good government but also to curb the recalcitrant propensities of the chiefs and amirs, and to make them settle down peacefully to their altered situation.

Now such a radical change in the political atmosphere of the country and in the minds of men who were being robbed of their power, prestige and privileges which they had long enjoyed, was not easy to effect. It could be brought about only by a gradual process of evolution, a process which was greatly accelerated by the extra-ordinary energy of Sher Shah and Akbar. There were two main fruits of this period of transition which commenced with the advent of Babar : (1) A new monarchy, and (2) a reformed administrative machinery. In bringing about this consummation the contribution of Babar and Humayun was but little, while that of Sher Shah was very considerable, though only indirect and one-sided because although by strengthening the position of the king, he created the necessary conditions for the Turkish ideal of monarchy to thrive, he himself adhered to the purely Afghan tradition of treating the kingdom as a tribal property and of sharing its fruits with the members of the Sur tribe. His son Islam Shah, on the other hand, made an earnest effort to resume the jagirs and convert all lands into crown lands, and moreover adopted very strong and bold measures to shatter the arrogance and prestige of the amirs and to establish the supremacy of the king. Thus by their strong policy, centralised power and efficient administration under which even the most powerful chief was forced to submit to the king's authority, and no dereliction or neglect of duty was allowed to escape unpunished, Sher Shah and Islam Shah prepared the ground for the gradual acceptance of the new principle of monarchy. The restoration of strict order and discipline among the highest functionaries of the State and the establishment of a vigorous and efficient system of government was the proud achievement of the first two Sur

kings. And paradoxical as it may appear, not Babar and Humayun, the founders of the Mughal Empire, but their enemies the Suri kings, were destined to be the builders of that substructure on which the superstructure of Mughal administrative machinery was subsequently raised by Akbar.

It was, however, reserved for a subsequent generation to witness the gradual and almost imperceptible transformation in the political psychology of the people. The transitional period from the advent of Babar to the accession of Akbar was too stormy and unsettled and too anti-authoritarian for such a seed to thrive. It needed not only the congenial soil of a well-organised system of government, but also the watering of a well-established and enduring security and peace-conditions: and this it was the unique merit of Akbar to bring about. Moreover he was—what the Surs could never be—the embodiment of that divinely gifted monarchy which the sanctified tradition of his house had bequeathed to him. From the Turkish and Persian chiefs and amirs and from Hindu vassals, he had no serious trouble. But wherever an Afghan chief had survived, e.g., in Bengal and Gujarat, he never, till the end, gave up his struggle for independence. As time passed the unquestionable and indeed sacred authority of the Mughal emperor went deeper and deeper into men's minds and old memories vanished. Akbar's task was that of the master-architect. He reared up an edifice at once scientifically elaborate and stable and artistically beautiful and human. His successors enjoyed the fruits of his labours.

They had not the genius to improve upon it. Akbar stands like a tower of eminence in the midst of pigmies on both sides.

## II—The Administrative System of the Surs.

*Sher Shah's principles of Government.*—As early as the time when Farid (the future Sher Shah) as a youngman was entrusted by his father Hasan Khan with full authority over the parganahs of Sahsaram, Hajipur and Khawaspur Tanda and was deputed to assume charge, he had said to

his father: 'I shall devote myself to increase the prosperity of the district; and that depends on a just administration.' These words in which the chronicler has reproduced what Sher Shah said at that time give a clear indication of Sher Shah's ideal of a king's obligations. And this ideal he consistently maintained throughout his life. Sher Shah very well understood the principle that the advancement of the state is synonymous with the progress and prosperity of the people.

Possessed of a keen faculty of observation, a sound common-sense and statesmanlike outlook Sher Shah adopted from the outset very sound and practical principles as the basis of his administration. First and foremost it was necessary to restore peace and tranquillity in the land, without which no progress was possible. The anarchical atmosphere of the later Lodhi regime had bred a spirit of insurgence and unrestrained ambition all over. Every provincial chief aspired to capture the crown. Moreover the weakness of the centre had encouraged the local functionaries of the government to become oppressive on the people, and extortionate in realising revenue from the peasants. Sher Shah had been from his youth painfully conscious of this state of affairs and as he told his father at the time of his appointment to his jagir, he meant business. He would not, he said, brook any insubordination nor allow the chiefs and zamindars to tyrannise over the peasants. The situation called for strong and even ruthless measures and Sher Shah found that this was the only way of restoring order and discipline, security and peace. His first principle was therefore to inflict the severest punishments on disturbers of peace and all other miscreants so as to terrify them into submission and set an example to others. By this device he succeeded in restoring order and peace and clearing the country of all robbers and thieves in no time.

His second principle was to create confidence in and respect for the ruler in the minds of the subjects by an efficient, just and progressive administration calculated to

make them happy and prosperous. Once peace and security were established Sher Shah changed from a ruthless chastiser to a benevolent despot whose whole energy and efforts were devoted for the good of the people.

Thirdly he believed in breaking all artificial barriers between the peasantry and the ruler and establishing direct and free contact with them with a view to minimising the possibilities of oppression and injustice by facilitating their access to the king.

Fourthly realising fully that the basis and the source of the existence and stability of the State is finance, he was most concerned about the welfare and safety of the cultivators. Therefore whenever he had any chance of governing, whether a jagir, a province or a kingdom, the first thing he did was to take all necessary steps to make the peasantry perfectly safe and put their minds at ease in order to encourage and enhance cultivation which was the main source of the income of the State.

Fifthly, Sher Shah thought it necessary to establish a reign of strict justice for all without favour or frown. Rather than show any favour or undue consideration to men of high position or family status, he gave them much severer punishments than the common people; because he held that a man of position was expected to behave in a more responsible and sensible manner than the average man.

Sixthly, Sher Shah believed like Asoka and Harsh and Akbar that 'it behoves the great *i. e.*, the rulers, to be always active', and to devote undivided and unsparing attention and energy in the service of the State.

Seventhly, he discarded the policy of placing religious bigotry above considerations of the good of the kingdom and that of sacrificing the interests of the people at the altar of narrow religious obligations.

Eighthly, his principle was to spend the greater part of the revenue of the State on the welfare of the people in general and not to usurp it for his personal whims or comforts.

His whole life as well as the occasional expressions of his views bear unmistakable testimony to the above analysis of the principles which informed the government of Sher Shah.

*Sher Shah's principles tested by Islamic Standards.*—The above statement of Sher Shah's principles of government must be judged also in the light of the obligations and duties of a Muslim King as propounded by Muslim jurists. Al Mawardi summarises the duties of a Muslim king as follows :—

(1) To maintain the essential tenets of the Faith, (2) to decide disputes among the subjects, (3) to protect the Islamic countries, (4) to wage war on those who refuse to embrace Islam or to obey those conditions which have been laid down for non-Muslims, (5) to make use of the Law, (6) to defend the frontiers of the kingdom, (7) to make annual expenditure from the treasury, (8) to realise the taxes, (9) to appoint reliable officers, (10) to supervise the administration and carry on the government efficiently and well.<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that Sher Shah's principles show only such necessary modifications as the circumstances of a country with a very large non-Muslim population demanded.

*The Central Government of Sher Shah : The Sovereign*—All monarchies of that age were, in structure and in theory, if not altogether in practice, despotic. But Sher Shah's government was, by the nature of the case, the most centralised and undiluted despotism. It was in this respect unique and without a parallel. The peculiar circumstances of his accession to kingship made him, not only in theory but in actual practice, the ultimate source of all power and authority, both civil and military. Of all the medieval monarchs Sher Shah was the only one, who

<sup>1</sup> This is a substance of the duties of a king given by Von Krenmer, in 'Orient under the Caliphate', translated by Khuda Bakhsh, pp. 265-66.



had no ministers to assist him by their wise counsels in difficult situations and restrain him from hasty steps, to temper the severity of his judgments, or to mould his policies. He had only secretaries who enjoyed no more authority than merely to carry out the biddings of the king. Surprising as this might appear, the reason of it is not far to seek. Sher Shah had become king at the end of a long period of chaos and political disintegration in the country. The leading nobles and amirs had been too much involved in court intrigues and wars of offence and defence to have any time or inclination to cultivate the arts of the statesman and the politician which can only thrive in times of peace. Neither the condition of the government nor the general political atmosphere was such as to afford proper encouragement or facilities for any one acquiring a training and experience in high policies and statecraft. Besides, it should be borne in mind that Sher Shah became king at the ripe old age of sixty eight years and that he had already had several occasions of governing territories in Bihar, ranging from a few parganahs to a whole province. Sher Shah had made the best use of these opportunities and had not only mastered all the details of administration, but acquainted himself with the shortcomings and defects of the Afghan system which had been substantially preserved by Babar. He had openly passed strictures on Babar's government and no less on the methods of local administration by the Afghan chiefs. He had also tried drastically to improve the system wherever and whenever he got a chance to do so. For instance he had, for a fairly long period, administered the jagir of his father, and had made the people prosperous as they had never been before, by his strong and vigorous administration and by perfecting it in every detail. So when he became king he was thoroughly acquainted with not only the details of administration but also with its many defects and shortcomings, and hence he came with well-thought out and mature plans of reform and reconstruction. There was nothing to discuss, nothing to deliberate upon or decide, either in the matter of administrative plans or policies.

Every scheme had been tried, albeit on a smaller scale, and was ready to be launched.

Under such circumstances, first rate men, and consummate politicians alone could occupy ministerial offices, to deliberate with the king on matters of state policy. But the time was unc congenial for the production of first rate men. It could produce mediocrities only, and mediocrities had no place in Sher Shah's ministry.

No wonder therefore that a veteran of Sher Shah's calibre and capacity did not find any one among his contemporaries who could satisfy his standards of administrative experience and ability. Nor, luckily, did he need any one. He had the justifiable self-complacency of an architect who wanted no planners but only executants.

This is borne out by Mushtaqi when he says : "For four hours he listened to the reading of reports on the affairs of the country or on the business of the government establishments. The orders which he gave were reduced to writing, and were issued and acted upon ; *there was no need of further discussion.*"<sup>1</sup>

So we witness the rather extraordinary phenomenon of his having no ministers but only secretaries. This was the secret which explains the unusual expedition and ability with which he successfully introduced all his administrative plans and reforms as soon as he conquered any province or district.

Thus circumstances had made Sher Shah the most absolute despot among the entire range of Muslim rulers of India ; but his broad outlook and liberal mind made him an enlightened and benevolent despot at the same time. He followed a very regular routine of work. His historian says that Sher Shah used to rise when two-thirds of the night had passed, and bathing himself he said his prayers .....until the fourth watch (पहर). After that he heard

<sup>1</sup>Elliot, iv, 550.

the accounts of the various officers and the secretaries (arkan-i-daulat) made their reports of the work to be done in their respective departments, and the orders which the king gave were taken down by them for their guidance, so that they might not need to make enquiries again. At day-break, Sher Shah again performed his ablutions and with a great assembly went through his obligatory devotions, and read the prayer. After this the chiefs and soldiers were allowed to pay their respects. One hour after sunrise he performed the Ishraq prayer. Then he gave jagirs to such as did not possess any. Next he enquired if there were any who were oppressed and he redressed their grievances. Thus he worked very hard and did not allow himself more than the minimum necessary rest or comfort. Sher Shah's devotion to duty, energetic application to his work, and personal attention to every detail combined with strict inspection and scrutiny of the work of his subordinates, resulted in the establishment of such peace and security and order and discipline in the kingdom as had never been witnessed for centuries before.

*Extent of Sher Shah's kingdom.*—Sher Shah acquired a far greater territory than his Mughal predecessors. His dominions extended from Sonargaon in the east to the border of Gakkhar country in the north-west, the western boundary being formed by a line joining Jogi Balnath on the Jhelum in the north and Khushab nearly a hundred miles to south-west and thence running across the Jhelum along the bank of the Indus down to Bhakkar. Sindh had been surrendered to Sher Shah by its Afghan chieftains, but the desert country comprising Jaisalmer and Bikaner remained independent. In Rajputana he had extended his sway over Jodhpur, roughly as far as Abu and Chittor, while on the south he subjugated the country as far as Vindhya and Karakoram ranges which represented the boundaries of his kingdom on that side. Thus western Rajputana, Malwa, Bundelkhand and probably part of Baghelkhand and then Bihar, excluding Chhota Nagpur,

were all included in his kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

*Administrative Divisions*—Sher Shah seems to have retained more or less the former limits of the provinces, sarkars (Shiqqs) and parganahs. Although no list of the parganahs is given by any of his historians, the names of different provinces frequently occur in their chronicles. Abul Fazl says that Sher Shah divided his whole kingdom excepting Bengal into 47 sarkars. With the nineteen sarkars of Bengal the total will become 66. The total number of sarkars in the empire of Akbar was 105, and the extent of the territory nearly double that of Sher Shah. Thus the number of sarkars given by Abul Fazl for the kingdom of Sher Shah seems to have been almost the same as under Akbar. The slight changes which would have, no doubt, been made do not indicate a general re-shuffling of their sizes or boundaries. The following twelve provinces are mentioned in the chronicles : Bengal, Bihar, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Agra, Dihli, Lahore, Multan, Sindh, Jodhpur, Chittor, Malwa. But the extent of Bengal, Bihar, Lahore, Multan and Sindh was much smaller than under Akbar.

The Sarkars were divided into parganahs. The parganah was the smallest unit of administration. As regards the total number of parganahs the statements of the contemporary writers have created a great deal of confusion. But it seems reasonable to presume that the number 113000 which is mentioned by them represents the number of villages and not parganahs.<sup>2</sup> We have no means to know

<sup>1</sup>See 'Prov. Gov. of the Mughals' p. 49 for a full discussion of this question. Qanungo is wrong in saying that Sher Shah's north-western boundary extended as far as the Indus or that the whole of Rajputana including Abu were included within his kingdom. Nor was any part of Assam possessed by him.

<sup>2</sup>Abbas and according to a foot note on the same page (Elliot, iv, 424:) Mushtaqi also gives 113000, while on p. 551, he has only 13000. This seems to be a mistake of the translator. Qanungo's attempt to arrive at a probable number of the parganahs by multiplying the parganahs included in the provinces of the same name under Akbar, by three is, as usual, utterly

the exact number of parganahs other than an approximation which can be arrived at on the basis of the figures for the same territories given by Abū Fazl.

The provincial heads were the Afghan amirs and nobles who had co-operated with him in wresting back the kingdom of Hindustan from the Mughals.<sup>1</sup> We find mention of deputy governors also in most cases for the express reason that the newly conquered territories were full of turbulent and self-seeking men and consequently the governors required equally capable and responsible assistants to maintain peace and order. There is no mention of any other provincial officer by his chroniclers. But it seems certain that he had a provincial head of justice as well as of the revenue department.

The head of the *sarkar* was the chief shiqqdar (Shiqqdar-i-Shiqq-daran). The name *sarkar* seems to have come into vogue under Sikandar Lodi, in place of the former shiqq, which was probably a larger division. Under Sher Shah it was definitely adopted to the entire exclusion of 'shiqq'. The powers and functions of the chief shiqqdar were almost the same as those of faujdar of sarkar under Akbar. It seems that the faujdars were not authorised to act as magistrates which duty was entrusted to kotwals, while the chief shiqqdar exercised both powers, executive and judicial. The faujdar under Sher Shah was a sort of semi-military police officer, whose chief duty was to maintain order and security. He had a contingent of cavalry under his charge and was expected to assist

baseless and superfluous. He has wrongly presumed the areas of Bihar, Punjab and Sind, to be the same in both cases.

Moreover there was no reason for Sher Shah to sub-divide the parganahs into such small units. There is not the slightest hint in the chronicles for such a presumption to have any basis.

<sup>1</sup> Khizr Khan and then Qazi Fazilat were governors of Bengal, Shujaat Khan of Malwah, Ahmad Khan Sarwani of Dihli, Masnad-i-Ali Isa Khan of Rohilkhand, Khawas Khan of Lahore, Fateh Khan of Sindh.

the local officers whenever any rebels or disturbers of peace happened to be too strong for them. He was also expected to watch the roads and the countryside.

The next officer of the *sarkar* was the chief *amil*, or munsif. The primary function of the chief *amil* was to supervise the assessment and collection of revenue. The chief shiqqdar and chief *amil* were to watch the conduct of both the parganah officials and the people so that the former might not oppress any one and the latter might not misbehave or deceive the government. They were also to settle the quarrels of the parganah officials. In the event of any rebellion or lawlessness they were enjoined to destroy the miscreants ruthlessly so as to prevent the evil becoming contagious. The *amils* and other officers were transferred every year or two with the object of giving the benefit of profitable places uniformly to all and to prevent any one settling down in any territory permanently. We have enough grounds to presume that there was a qazi<sup>1</sup> and also a kotwal in every *sarkar*.

*Parganah*—The unit of administration was the parganah. The head of the parganah was called shiqqdar. He was assisted by an *amil* or munsiff (sometimes also called mushrif), a fotehdar, khazanahdar or or khazanchi, two karkuns (one Hindi writer and one Persian writer). It is to be noted that under the Khaljis and Tughlaqs the head of the parganah was called mutsarrif or *amil* and the shiqqdar was head of a shiqq. But in course of time shiqqdar sank to the position of the head of a parganah. The shiqqdar was the executive head of the parganah. He supervised the work of every other official, tried criminals, punished thieves, rebels and other miscreants and was responsible to the local treasury jointly with the khazanchi or fotehdar, the latter being answerable to him for the accounts, etc. The *amil* was in charge of the revenue administration in the parganah. He had to deal directly with the peasants; of course with the assistance of

<sup>1</sup> 'Abbas says; 'He appointed courts of justice in every place.' Elliot, IV., 417.

chiefs who had conquered them or by their descendants. These warrior chiefs owned only a nominal allegiance which was indicated by occasional payment of tribute to the Lord of Dhilli. In their internal Government they enjoyed complete liberty of action and policy. There was thus neither administrative homogeneity nor political solidarity in the kingdom. The security of the chiefs depended on mere force even as the security of the sovereign depended on his power to force allegiance and tribute from them. These warrior kinglets maintained in big towns garrisons to keep turbulence in check and to help in the realisation of revenue. Nor were the provincial boundaries well-defined. They were frequently shifting. These provinces were called *Iqtas* or *Wilayats*, and their rulers *Muqts* or *Walis*. An attempt was made under *Ala-uddin Khalji* to bring about uniformity in some departments of administration, but these measures never went beyond the 'Doab'. The revolutionary projects of *Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq* did not make any headway for lack of response. In the century and half following the death of *Muhammad Tughlaq* administrative efficiency followed a downward course ending in chaos and anarchy, and eventually in the conquest of the country by *Babar*. But neither *Babar* nor *Humayun* was endowed with that genius or experience which was required to build up a well-organised administrative structure. Hence, although the *Turko-Afghan* rulers of the land became in course of time thoroughly Indianised in their politico-social outlook, the basic principles and policy of the Government vis-a-vis the masses of the people underwent almost no modification.

It was *Sher Shah* who for the first time evinced the enlightened mind and sound commonsense of a far-sighted statesman. Not only did he essay earnestly and with success to define the territorial limits, and to establish uniformity in administration throughout the kingdom but also radically to change the policy and character of his government if only out of considerations of political expediency. Before *Sher Shah* the character of the Sultanate had remained that of a camp rule imposed on the people from above by sheer

force. Under Sher Shah it was transformed both in spirit and form into an enlightened despotism.

*Departments of Government*—The details available in the sources of Sher Shah's history are quite adequate to show that he had divided the various functions of the Government into separate departments with well-defined jurisdictions and spheres of work. We find mention of the military department, finance, public works, and judiciary and charities.

*The Army*—Since the days of Firoz Shah Tughlaq every branch of the Government machinery had become disorganised. Sikandar Lodi had made an abortive attempt to improve the general tone and discipline of the services but with no appreciable results. After Sikandar, Ibrahim's stormy regime left the administration in complete chaos. Sher Shah had therefore to thoroughly overhaul and reorganise every department, particularly because he observed many serious defects in the Mughal system under Babar and Humayun.

One great defect of the army of the Turko-Afghan rulers was that the contingents maintained by the provincial heads had hardly any direct obligation towards the Sultan. They were recruited, paid and commanded by their provincial authorities and hence greatly stimulated in the local chief, the tendency to revolt and become independent. Sher Shah centralised the control by making every soldier take an oath of fidelity to the King.

Sher Shah's army may be classed under two categories: (1) the central army and (2) the forces maintained and whenever necessary, supplied by the provincial and local governors. Some sort of Mansabdari system was clearly the basis of organisation and recruitment. The King himself recruited some men for his army, while the provincial governors, and presumably the faujdars and other local officers, were authorised to raise their own contingents, according to their respective mansab (rank). The highest mansab was of 30,000 horse<sup>1</sup>, but the mansabs were confined

<sup>1</sup>Haibat Khan Niaz had a force of 50,000 men in order to guard the frontier near Rohas fort.



only to higher officers.

Among the reforms introduced by Sher Shah the chief and most beneficial was the 'branding (dagh) regulation, and descriptive roll (chiktra), about which he was very strict. This step was taken in order to check fraud which was so common in the reign of Ibrahim Lodī. No soldier or even any other servants were paid unless they fulfilled the conditions of the branding and descriptive roll. This seems to point to the practice of all disbursements of salaries through the military department, a practice which was maintained and further regularised under Akbar. The soldiers were paid a fixed salary from the treasury. The system of payment by jagirs was discontinued.

The central standing army consisted of 1,50,000 cavalry and 25,000 infantry. But on expeditions he took even more men. His forces were armed either with bows or matchlocks. He had, in addition to this, a corps of 500 elephants. Sher Shah had no regular artillery.

The main contingents of the various mansabdars (commanders) were distributed as follows :

In Gwalior, one fauj and 1600	Bayana	500	"	matchlockmen.
"	Ranthambhor	1600	"	"
"	Chittorgarh	3000	"	"
"	Mandu	10000 cav. 7000	"	"
"	Raisin	one fauj, 1000	"	topchi
"	Chunar	1000	"	matchlockmen
"	Rohas	10000	"	"
(In the fort of Rohas was situated the Central treasury of the kingdom.)				
"	Kalpi one fauj and 12000 matchlockmen.			

There was also a fauj each in Lucknow, Dhandhera (Ambar), Bajhara (in Sirhind), Nagar and Ajmer.

From the above account it is clear that the term fauj meant cavalry, but its strength remains a matter of conjecture, although it is also clear that it was less than 10000

<sup>1</sup> See Elliot, IV, +12.

horse. Very likely it was five thousand, which was the minimum mansab of provincial governors. Thus the total strength of this army amounted to nearly one lakh cavalry and 50000 infantry.

*Finance.*—The main source of income was land revenue. Sher Shah was exceptionally careful about the safety and prosperity of the cultivators, whom he regarded as the backbone of the State. There were three methods prevalent in the land in pre-Muslim times by which land revenue was assessed or estimated. Ala-uddin had tried to revive the measurement system which had since fallen into disuse. But it was again abandoned from the time of Firuz Shah Tughlaq. Sher Shah restored this method wherever it was possible, and brought the major part of his kingdom under survey (zabt). In order to ensure accuracy of measurement and honesty in collections, he fixed the wages of the measurers and collectors. Sher Shah's demand was one-third or thirty-three per cent of the actual produce, the province of Multan being the only exception where the rate of assessment was  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the yield. In regard to the form of payment full option was given to the cultivators to pay either in kind or cash.

In the method of survey, the holding under cultivation of each cultivator was measured for every harvest and recorded. The average yield of each unit of area was obtained from the records or knowledge of the qanungos, and one third of this was fixed as the share due to the king, and was realised at the time of harvest. Besides the survey system, the two other systems called batai or ghalla-bakshi (sharing) and kankut also obtained in those parts where it was not found workable. In batai the harvest was divided into three equal heaps in the presence of the government collector, the village headmen and mudaddan as well as the cultivator. One of the heaps was taken by the government and two were left to the cultivator. Kankut signified a method of compounding or agreeing upon a common estimate of the crop before it was harvested, between the peasant and the government officers. One-

third of this estimate was then realised at harvest time.

The practice of measuring the lands every harvest must have entailed considerable expense and labour to the government and inconvenience to the peasants. This defect as we shall see, was remedied by the 'Ten Year Settlement' of Akbar. In the all too brief space of a few years Sher Shah had organised the most complicated revenue department with remarkable quickness and success more than which could hardly have been done by any other person. Very likely Sher Shah also had all land classified according to its fertility.

Besides land revenue there were some other sources of income, such as transit or custom duty which was collected at two places: (1) In the west at Rohas and other frontiers upon goods entering the country from outside, and (2) in the east at Sakrigali pass, upon goods coming from Bengal. An octroi duty was also levied on merchants at the place of sale. All other duties and taxes, either on roads or ferries, in town or village, were strictly forbidden.

The zakat (if it continued to be realised from Muslims) and jizyah as well as war booty were additional sources of some income. But it seems that the jizyah was not very strictly enforced, though it was not formally abolished. The central treasury of Sher Shah was in the fort of Rohas (East), but he used to keep enough money in provincial and local treasuries against emergencies.

*Expenditure.*—There were four main channels of expenditure: army, civil administration, public works and charitable endowments, privy purse and royal household. We know that the total of the standing army of Sher Shah, both central and provincial, was about three lakhs, plus 5000 elephants. The expenditure during wars, which the king had to wage almost ceaselessly, must have been considerably larger. The number of secretaries for each department must have been at least three or four with a number of superintendents, clerks, accountants, working under them. In the twelve provinces there must have been at

least three more high officials besides the governor, i.e., the heads of revenue, judicial and police departments, each with a staff of his own. There were about seventy sarkars and over a thousand parganas. It is however impossible to make even a rough estimate of the expenditure on these services for sheer lack of any information in that connection. Nor are there any data available concerning the establishment maintained in the sarais. We only know that as many as 1700 sarais were built by him and the capital investment on these must have been considerable. Besides the recurring expense incurred on the establishment maintained by the state for the comfort of the travellers and merchants, both Hindu and Muslim, seems to be almost unbelievable. Then he built several trunk roads connecting the distant parts of the country and planted fruit trees on both sides of them which should have involved much investment. As regards the personal and household expenses of the King we are equally in the dark. We only know that Shah was quite restrained and abstemious and his household expenditure was comparatively meagre considering the usual ways of the rulers of that age.

The only item of expense of which the historian of Shah Shah has furnished some data is the department of charities. The King had opened free kitchens (Langar-i-tugara) in several places. Several thousands of poor and destitute people were fed in these every day. He settled allowances on the poor and blind in every place and village and city. Thousands of soldiers and servants of the state also dined in the royal kitchen daily. 'Two institutions', says Mushtaqi, 'were maintained during his reign without interruption: one, *imarat khana*, the other, the houses for the poor, for the institutions confer general benefit.' Five hundred gold ashras was spent on the langar every day, i.e., 1,82,500 ashras per year. Calculated at the rate of gold in terms of silver, which according to Ibd. Thomas<sup>2</sup> was as 1 : 97, nearly 1 Elliot, IV, 579. 'Imarat Khana' has been translated in Elliot as religious establishments, but I think it means the 'department of buildings.'<sup>2</sup> See 'Chronicles', 405.

5,000 silver tankas or rupees daily or 18,25,000, annually, was spent on this charity. Besides this Sher Shah spent equally liberally on the poor and the needy, the widows and the sick, as well as on grants and stipends (wazifas) to religious and educational institutions and to those who maintained them.

*Justice*—The information concerning the judiciary of Sher Shah, in the contemporary sources, is practically nil. It seems that because Sher Shah made no appreciable changes in the previous system, the chroniclers did not deem it necessary to describe it. We are, however, told that Sher Shah had established 'courts of justice in every place' which shows that there were regular courts, rising from the local ones to the highest court of the King. But though nothing is said about the judicial organisation we are told enough about the care and concern of the King about justice. First, he allowed everybody, even the humblest and meanest, to prefer complaints against the tyranny of officials, directly to the King without any check or hindrance. Secondly he gave very severe punishments to oppressors of the peasantry. Thirdly he made no distinction between high and low and indeed chastised men of high power and position even more severely. Fourthly he gave deterrent punishments to thieves and robbers and other enemies of the public. These principles of Sher Shah must have exercised a very wholesome and sobering influence on those responsible for the administration of justice in the country, and in establishing the reign of justice and fair play. It seems almost certain that the ancient village and community panchayats (councils) were recognised by the government and were allowed to carry out their work undisturbed.

*Public Works*—Among the many admirable achievements of Sher Shah, his most well-known and concrete contribution were his public works. His public works, planned and executed in a miraculously short time were for a long time after him regarded as the greatest monuments to his glory. They serve to show his benevolent intentions and solicitude for the welfare of all classes of his people.

The most unique programme of national reconstruction launched by Sher Shah was that of his roads and sarais. By his roads he connected the most important points in the kingdom from end to end. The largest of his roads was built from Sunargaon (Dacca) to Kohlas on the Jhelum. This road which seems to have followed the track of the Mauryan road connecting Gour with the north-west, became the precursor of the modern G. T. Road which joins Calcutta with Peshawar. Another road was built from Benares to Mandu<sup>1</sup>. Agra being the hub of the empire, several roads radiated from it in different directions connecting it with Burhanpur on the borders of the Deccan, Jodhpur in Marwar, Ajmer in the heart of Rajputana, and Chittor in Mewar. One important road was constructed between Agra and Delhi to connect them straight, west of the Jumna, formerly communication between the two places was only through the Doab.<sup>2</sup> Another road was built from Bayana to Jaunpur on the one side and Ajmer on the other. One more road still connected Lahore with Multan. The utility of these roads was great and many-sided, as I shall presently explain, but it was infinitely enhanced by the construction of sarais on all the roads at intervals of two kos. Abbis says that shady fruit trees were planted on both sides of the roads but Alushaqi adds that gardens were also laid out along with the *sarais*.<sup>3</sup> The *sarais* were fully equipped with all amenities necessary for the comfort of travellers. Inside each *sarai* there was a well and a mosque of burnt brick. But the most important building attached to each *sarai* was the 'royal chamber' (*Khana-i-Shahi*) which must have served the purpose of a Government inspection house to lodge Government officers on tour. The staff of the sarais consisted of a *shahna* (custodian), an *imam* (priest), a *mu'azzin* (crier), and several watchmen. But what is most striking and remarkable is that he appointed Brahmans to cater for the Hindus and employed

<sup>1</sup> Alushaqi in Elliot, IV, 550.  
<sup>2</sup> Elliot, VI, 188.  
<sup>3</sup> Ibid., IV, 550.

separate cooks, known as Bhatiaras to cook for the Hindus. Those who would not accept cooked food were given raw victuals.<sup>1</sup> Besides this, separate pitchers of water were provided at the gates of the sarais for Hindus and Muslims. Another author says that cooked food was distributed free to the Muslims and flour and ghee and other necessities to the Hindus.<sup>2</sup> In addition to food, hot and cold water and even beds were provided to men and provender and grain for their horses or oxen. These sarais also had the dak chowkies attached to them, and seventeen hundred, or according to some authors, 2500 such, were erected by Sher Shah all over the kingdom. For the upkeep of all this establishment villages around the sarais were allotted to them. These were managed by a Shiqdar. These arrangements were altogether unique and unprecedented in their magnitude. They serve to show the extraordinary magnanimity and fairness of Sher Shah's mind.

The roads served a variety of purposes. Travelling having been made absolutely safe, the facility of travelling afforded by the roads was very greatly enhanced as is evident from the fact that transit duties and octroi tax became a plentiful source of government revenue under Sher Shah. Moreover the roads also served as means of consolidating the king's authority by bringing even the distant parts of the kingdom into easier and quicker accessibility from the centre. The same fact added greatly to the security of the kingdom from external danger, by facilitating transmis-

<sup>1</sup> Khafi Khan, (Bib-Ind. Text.) I, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Sujan Rai's Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh Ms. No.  $\frac{36}{3}$  of the B. H. U. fol. 216a. The other two Mss. in the B. H. U. Library have the same reading:  $\frac{36}{3}$  of the B. H. U. Professor S. R. Sarma's accusation against Sher Shah, (see 'Religious Policies of the Mughals', p. 11), would seem to be utterly baseless and unfair in view of all these precautions to satisfy even the most orthodox Hindus.

sion of news and the movement of armies from one part to another. But perhaps the most far-reaching and lasting benefit accruing from the roads was the unconscious strengthening of the feeling of oneness, economic, social and cultural, which must have resulted from a restoration, under those conditions of peace and security, of a much closer and wider contact between the people of the distant parts of this extensive land, a contact which had naturally become greatly restricted and scarce for several centuries, from the lack of proper facilities of movement.

The sarais too were not mere hostels. As already mentioned, to them were attached post-houses as well as government inspection houses. These functions of the sarais, however, will be noticed in their proper context.

The sarais and roads together with the post houses and various other institutions of public utility and welfare remind us of such glorious periods of ancient India as the Mauryan or the Gupta period, in which these institutions and public works were far more advanced. Concerning the Gupta regime, Ra Hien says that the people were full of wealth and prosperity, and there were numerous religious and charitable institutions scattered over the country. For the convenience of travellers there were rest houses on the roads, and there was a big charitable hospital in the capital for the upkeep of which educated and generous men had made large endowments.

*Postal-service, spies and police.*—For carrying post two horses were kept in each sarai. The postal arrangements which obtained during the Sultanate period were revived and put in a sound working condition. The speed with which post could be carried can be judged from the instance of Husam Tashdar who is said to have travelled 300 miles in the course of a single day.<sup>1</sup>

*Spies.*—The spy system of Sher Shah was as perfect and proficient as other departments. Although nothing more



than a mere incidental reference to the existence of spies occurs in the sources. We are, however, told that spies were sent with every force of nobles in order that they might secretly enquire about their activities and the condition of the country and report it to the king so that he should come to know if any of them was guilty of contumacy, inefficiency or neglect of duty. A very fine instance of the excellent and quick work of the spies is afforded by the case of Shujat Khan, governor of Malwah, who on the advice of his nobles, tried to pay to his soldiers something less than their fixed salaries. The matter reached the ears of the king before the representatives (vakils) of the soldiers arrived at court to report it. Shujat Khan was severely scolded for his conduct and given a frightful warning against repetition of such conduct.

*Police.* If the soundness and excellence of a system or department of administration is to be measured—by its results, the police system of Sher Shah deserves the highest admiration. He established a degree of security in the country which had not been known for centuries and was admired by historians for centuries after him. This security was established by making those very sections of people, viz., the chowdhries and muqaddams of villages, responsible for it, who were expected to know or even sometimes were the accomplices and abettors of the robbers and thieves of their respective localities. When a theft, robbery or murder occurred, the muqaddams and headmen of the locality were arrested and unless they found out and apprehended the culprit they had either to restore the lost property or to suffer imprisonment or execution. It, therefore, became the interest of the leading men themselves of each locality to keep watch over it for the sake of their own safety.

The second device of Sher Shah was to administer exemplary and deterrent punishments when the culprit was caught. These measures may sound inhuman but they had the wholesome effect of restoring such security and freedom from every sort of theft or robbery that the very name of

such occurrences was unknown during his reign. At the same time the spies of the king were so circumspect, as pointed out above, that the slightest misuse of power on their part was reported to the king without delay and the guilty officer never escaped either severe reprimand or punishment, as he deserved.

-On the basis of a remark of Abbas that Sher Shah used to transfer his favourites to profitable districts after every two or three years to enable them to make good gains, Wolsley Haig has given free play to his imagination and concluded that this pernicious practice encouraged officials to make all that they could in the short time during which they held office.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the old favourite officers were appointed as heads of districts which post carried good salaries, profits and advantages. But there is no warrant in this for building the conclusion which Wolsley Haig has done, especially in view of Sher Shah's extreme strictness in maintaining the honesty and uprightness of all government officers by means of administering frightful chastisement to derelicts and oppressors of the people. It is unbelievable that a man like Sher Shah could have brooked, much less himself encouraged, or furnished the opportunities for, such corruption. It is therefore certain that there were some legitimate and well-known sources of income, such as commissions fixed by the government, which accrued to the officers, although these means are not specified by the historian.

*Coinage and currency reform.*—"Sher Shah's reign," says Edward Thomas, "constitutes an important test point in the annals of Indian coinages, not only in its specific mini-reforms, but as correcting the progressive deteriorations of previous kings, and as introducing many of those improvements which the succeeding moghals claimed as their own."<sup>2</sup> This remark is true in another sense also. The coinage of the first two Moghals and that of Sher Shah throws a flood of light not only on their mental attitude

<sup>1</sup> Vide, C. H. I., IV, 56. (1st Edition).

<sup>2</sup> Chronicles, 403.

and policy but also on their general equipment and fitness

as administrators.

The coins of Babar and Humayun are found to have some distinctive characteristics. In the first place they do not bear any legend in Devanagari inscription along side the Persian one of giving a Devanagari inscription along side the Persian one had begun with Alahmud and was followed upto the time of Sultan Jalal-uddin Firoz Khali. It was given up since Ala-uddin's time, the coins from that time bearing legends only in Persian characters. This practice was continued by Babar and Humayun. But even a more significant feature was that the coins of Babar before the battle of Khanwaha do not bear the word *Ghazi*, a title which was adopted and proclaimed by Babar, as we have observed above, at the time when he was confronted by a formidable Hindu foe. This practice was then continued under Humayun. Akbar also, during the early part of his reign, allowed the established practice to continue until he had the time to pay attention to and modify it to conform with his general policy. Thirdly, the silver coins of Babar, designated by Abul Fazl under the generic terms of *Babaris*, were exactly like the Shahrukhis (of the Persian Emperor Shah Rukh, whose coins were spread all over Asia) both in weight and form. They were thus a mere imitation and continuation of Shahrukhis. The coinage of Sher Shah is found to be free from these three features. Sher Shah revived the practice of putting a legend in Devanagari characters beside the Persian one. He did not style himself *Ghazi*, and his whole coinage was purely indigenous, suited to the requirements of the people of the land. On the contrary, as Ed. Thomas has pointed out, although much improvement was made in the excellence of their execution and in making them more artistic, no effort seems to have been made by the first two Chaghtai kings to assimilate their system of coinage to the wants of their new subjects. But Thomas has gone a bit off the point in thinking that, in this regard, the intention..... appears to have been to force upon the conquered country the style of coin and scheme of exchange in use in the

distant kingdoms whence the invaders came. The true cause, however, which was responsible for their imitation of the Shahrukhis as also of the other features noticed above, was rather the lack of experience and knowledge of the administrative details of the country. In all our comparisons of the two Chaghtai emperors and Sher Shah we should never forget the fundamental fact that the former being foreigners were thoroughly unacquainted with the institutions of India, while the latter was an Indian to the marrow his bones and besides, possessed of a long and intimate knowledge of the administrative traditions and affairs of the country. Thus it would be perhaps unfair to ascribe any motive of oppression in their continuing a replica of the Shahrukhî coinage. This is further affirmed by the fact that they did not abrogate the use of the indigenous coins which were current from before. The title of Ghazi too, as we know, was adopted as a clever political move rather than from any religious bigottedness. The above reasons explain the great difference between the coin systems of the first two Mughals and Sher Shah. The latter will now be briefly noticed.

The exotic coins did not survive long particularly because, as Thomas says, Sher Shah, 'with the advantages of his individual local experience and clear administrative capacity, quickly reconstructed the currency upon the most comprehensive basis.

The foremost reform in coinage introduced by Sher Shah was that he superseded the previous coins of mixed metals, and substituted coins of a single metal, thus avoiding the possibilities of cheating and dishonesty which mixed coins afforded at every stage. At the same time he revised and readjusted the relative values of silver and copper. Thirdly, he substituted in place of the previous coins of indeterminate weights, coins of definite weight and purity, his silver *tanka* being fixed at 11½ masha=178 grains. The term rupee probably came into vogue for this silver *tanka* of Sher Shah and Akbar's *tahi* was only another name for the same coin with a new stamp. Of the copper

*tanka* the weight was fixed at  $1\frac{3}{4}$  tolas = 21 mashas = 330 gr. and coins of  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{8}$  weight of the copper *tanka*. This came to be called *dām* under Akbar and later on *double paisa* or *adhamia* in modern times. Such small divisions of the copper *tanka* were required because of the extreme cheapness of commodities at that time. One Bahloli or Sikandari *tanka* could buy 10 maunds of grain. One Bahloli was enough for the expenses of a traveller with a servant and a horse, to go from Dihli to Agra. The silver *tanka* or rupia of Sher Shah which was an improved and regularised form of the Bahloli and Sikandari *tanka*, was the precursor of the modern rupee. It was retained under Akbar and his successors and was adopted in 1835 by the East India Company in the form of the rupee of King William IV.

The fourth important reform was made in the management and efficiency of the mints by subjecting them to such strict supervision as to render all corruption and cheating in the minting impossible. By this means the issue of reliable coins of a specified standard was assured.

The fifth improvement was greatly to increase the number of mints. There were about seven mints under Babar and nine under Humayun, but under Sher Shah we can count as many as twenty-three mints, so that every important locality had its own mint. The intention of establishing so many mints was to give every facility to the people to get their metals converted into coins whenever they needed them. This, was convenient for the government and avoided the unnecessary difficulty of transport.

In order to establish the coinage and its relative values on a stable basis it was necessary to fix a rate of exchange between gold and silver. This, as is evident from a study of his coins, was fixed by Sher Shah at nearly 1 : 9, which was the ratio previously current in the country. The coins of Sher Shah were both round and square in shape. There were coins of only three metals, gold, silver and copper. The chief legend on them was in Arabic or Persian characters, but the kings' name was also

in Devanagiri. The names of the first four *khalifas* on four corners indicate that Sher Shah was a devout Muslim. The Hindi legends incidentally afford also specimens of the language and script of that age.

*Contribution of Sher Shah.*—All contemporary and later writers as well as modern students of his history are agreed in the estimate that Sher Shah was one of the ablest, most vigorous and clear-headed administrators of medieval times.

Among the Muslim rulers of India it was he who for the first time laid down a definite policy that the aim and object of the ruler should be to work unsparingly for the happiness and welfare of his subjects. This he regarded as the highest ideal of the state, and his contribution toward the fulfilment of this object was great and enduring. His vigorous and comprehensive reforms, his consolidation of the vast territories under his sway by enforcing a uniform system all over, his encouragement of art and industry and commerce, his public works, and above all the revival of the feeling, as a result of all these measures of cementing them all, of oneness among the people of the country, constituted the first sincere endeavour at nation-building since the establishment of Muslim rule in India. Thus Sher Shah bequeathed a proud and glorious legacy to his successors.

*Islam Shah's modifications.*—Islam Shah, the son and successor of Sher Shah, though nowhere near Sher Shah's greatness, was yet a very strong and energetic ruler. He had added some more territories to those which he had inherited, viz., the lower reaches of mountains north of the Punjab and eastern Bengal.

Reference has already been made to the manner in which Islam Shah further strengthened the position of the king by crushing the nobility and making them acquiesce to very humiliating conditions. He began by depriving them of their male elephants only leaving one female elephant with each, and greatly restricted their social and convivial gatherings. By another decree he forbade the use by the nobles of red tents restricting their use for the king alone. But the

most effective measure was the rather extra-ordinary order that the instrument of instructions and regulations covering eighty sheets of paper, which the king had drawn up for the guidance of all government employees, was to be read out every Friday to all of them assembled under a canopy and they were to bow to the slippers of the king which were enthroned respectfully on the pulpit to represent the king. This ceremony was held in every district throughout the kingdom.

Moreover Islam Shah resumed almost all jagirs excepting *maddad-i-maash* and *'aima-grants*. He made certain improvements in the army too. He formed troops of 50, 200, 250 and 500 and appointed a competent staff for their management. Among the higher grades he formed commands of 500, 1000 and 2000, each of which was placed under a sardar assisted by an Afghan munsiff, a Hindustani judge, and two eunuchs of the palace. This system became the basic structure which was elaborated by Akbar into the Mansabdari system.

In imitation of his father, Islam Shah added one more sarai between each two sarais of Sher Shah, although this seems to have been superfluous. According to Daudi Islam Shah further extended the charity instituted by Sher Shah, and ordered that arrangements for giving alms should be made at each sarai instead of only in the royal camp, as under Sher Shah. All the arrangements made for the Hindus and Musalmans by Sher Shah were continued by Islam Shah, and the efficiency and strength of the administration were not allowed to deteriorate.

*Nature and character of Mughal Polity.*—Islam had no pre-conceived philosophy or theory of State. It does not recognise the substantive or independent existence of the state as a social institution. According to Islamic law the state is not the primary or fundamental condition of human society. It is the creed, as defined by the law of God, which circumscribes the sole aim and end of human existence, and hence the duty of the Muslim, both as an individual and as a social being is to fulfill the law, and thus to help attain the aim and object of the Creed. The State emerged into existence as a result of the growing and inevitable needs of subserving the ends of the Creed. Hence according to the Islamic conception the State is but an instrument to serve the Creed in the attainment of its object or the ideal of the *Millet* of Islam, as revealed to it through the medium of the Prophet. It is only a handmaid and an adjunct of the Creed. If it fails of its duty of rightly and fully subserving the Creed, it forfeits its right to exist. The Islamic polity thus founded was followed by political speculation. Although Roman and Greek sources were freely drawn upon in defining and expounding the scope and functions of the State, yet it was imperative that the Quran, the unalterable, eternal Word of God, should be proclaimed to be the sole and ultimate source of all law. In theory the theocratic origin of the Law and State could not be altered without committing a breach with the creed. Further the Islamic state contemplated the Muslims alone, that is to say, only the community of the Faithful, to be entitled to the citizenship of the state. It was conceived essentially as a *communal theocracy* admitting only a particular section of society distinguished by the profession of a certain faith, to the exclusion of all other human

(CENTRAL)

## POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE MUGHALS

### CHAPTER IV



beings. God was the head and ultimate sovereign of the Muslim State, and the earthly ruler, the *Khalifa* his deputy or vicergerent, created and deputed by God solely for the purpose of carrying out the divine dictates. The *Khalifa* was the supreme administrator, judge and military leader, having inherited these functions from the Prophet but not the prophetic office which was said to have come to an end with the Prophet's passing away. The *Khalifa* was an absolute despot, his absolutism was circumscribed and tempered only by the divinely inspired law, but not by any earthly power. It is also to be noted that the Law of Islam conceives the existence of only one *Khalifa* or leader and ruler of the entire Islamic world. According to one of the greatest modern exponents of Islamic Law and Policy, 'Islamic *Millat* is based on the Unity of God and the finality of the Prophet'.....and being so based the Islamic *Millat* is not confined to territorial limits. Nationalism is foreign to Muslim polity : to a Muslim the entire world is his abode and place of worship. for it lies within the 'Sovereignty of Allah'.<sup>1</sup> But the force of circumstances, never contemplated by the Founder of the Faith, compelled a radical modification of this ideal. Within almost a century centrifugal tendencies manifested themselves in the distant parts of the vast Muslim Empire and it was not long when various chiefs set up independent principalities in different lands, many of which became extremely powerful reducing the *Khalifa* to a mere figure-head. All these kingdoms nominally acknowledged the spiritual sovereignty of the Caliph but in temporal matters they were their own masters. The chief visible token of the Caliph was the retention of his name in the *Khutbah*, "a bidding prayer" recited on Fridays in the mosque throughout Islam, and on the coins. It is extremely probable that even this fragment of authority was only allowed to survive for reasons of state, principally to invest with a show of legitimacy the claims of the various rulers who were, theoretically at least, vassals of god's vicergerent on earth, the

<sup>1</sup>Islamic culture, Oct. 1944, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, p. 384 and 388.

Caliph of Baghdad." <sup>1</sup> Such then was in general the position assumed by the Muslim rulers of different countries. Even when all but the ghost of the *Khilafat* had vanished the Muslim potentates of distant lands sought to legalise their assumption of authority by obtaining confirmation or occasionally a regular investiture by the *Khifā*.

But by the time the Mughals became rulers of India another far-reaching change had come about. It was no more necessary for the rulers to obtain investiture or even formal recognition from the *Khāifa* in order to legalise their right to rule. Every great king assumed the roll of *Khāifa* in his own right for all practical purposes, although some shadowy recognition of the authority of the early *Khāifas* was still retained by the common practice of these rulers, of inscribing the names of the first four *Khāifas* on their seals and coins and repetition of their names in the *Khutbah*. Thus in theory, at any rate, the Mughal rulers, like all other contemporary Muslim rulers, regarded themselves as true Muslim rulers and conveniently ignored the fact that they had departed very far in their actual practice from the basis of Muslim Law. It was but some of them tried very vigorously to vindicate their position by, as far as possible, utilising all the resources of the state in the service of the Creed and for the Muslim community primarily.

Akbar stood like a solitary tower in the midst of intellectual and cultural pigmies who went before or came after him. His genius was too great for either of them to comprehend. Possessed of a rare breadth of outlook, penetrative vision and insight and profound comprehension, he gave to Islam and the Muslim State a garb which was intended to shelter all human beings under its wings instead of confining itself to serving a single community. The character of the Muslim State was modified and widened so as to convert it from a communal and restricted theocracy into a *universal theocracy*. For two decades the

<sup>1</sup> Camb. Med. H. II, III, 300-301.

young emperor strove to pull the static and obdurate theologians and mullahs up to his level of thinking and to make them realise the need of a fresh interpretation and application of the Law in view of the changed and changing social environments; but finding them adamant and immovable, he felt constrained to restore or re-arrogate to himself the roll of the final interpreter or *Mujtahid* of the Law of the Qur'an, under due restrictions, of course. In this Akbar anticipated Iqbal who says that "the ultimate spiritual basis of all life as conceived by Islam is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change.....The teaching of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation guided, but not hampered, by the work of its predecessor should be permitted to solve its own problems" Commenting on this Mr. M. A. Ahmad says "This implied the right of *Ijtihad*—independent judgment and interpretation of law in the light of changed and changing circumstances which Iqbal holds essential to the healthy development of the body politic". "The closing of the doors of *Ijtihad*", contends Iqbal, "is pure fiction".<sup>1</sup>

Holding such a progressive view of the Law as he did Akbar from the very start of his career began by wiping out all unjust and offensive distinctions between man and man, on the ground of faith, sect or community, and restored to every subject of the state equal rights of citizenship. By placing all his subjects on an equal civic footing and by respecting their just sentiments Akbar brought about a fundamental change in the nature of the Muslim Polity in India. Broad based on the people's will, the Universal Theocracy of Akbar was a genuinely *national state*, a state which was based on the conception of a common culture, common heritage and a common country to which the entire people belonged.

His contemporaries and even his successors failed to comprehend the profound significance of the change. It

is, however, a tragic irony that the enlightened principles propounded and applied by Akbar nearly four centuries ago are beyond the comprehension of many an 'enlightened' person of modern times.

*The aims of Akbar's Government.* The aim of Akbar was to be continually attentive to the health of the body politic, and to remedy its diseases, shortcomings and evils so as to bring about perfection of life and assure its happiness, strength and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of Akbar's rule was born of the belief that royalty is a light emanating from God. Hence among the many excellent qualities which flow from this light, the two foremost are : 'a parental attitude towards the subjects' and 'a large heart'.<sup>2</sup>

*Position of the Sovereign and the nature of Mughal Government.* Such being the nature and aims of the government the subjects had no hand in the creation and constitution of administrative institutions and agencies. Legally the king was the fountainhead of all authority. He was the supreme administrator, commander and judge, all in one. He was the source of the entire administrative law.

In theory the sovereign's authority could not be questioned even by the highest and mightiest person in the realm. It was limited by no worldly law or agency. Even in the event of differences among doctors of Islamic Law regarding a religious matter or interpretation of the Law, the sovereign's judgment and opinion were final, provided they were not in conflict with the spirit of the *Shariat* (Canon Law).

In actual practice, however, the authority of the sovereign was circumscribed in many ways. Such a thing as an unlimited autocracy is a 'monstrosity' and has never existed anywhere. And the Mughal Sovereignty was no exception.

<sup>1</sup> The manner in which the king should ensure the achievement of this aim is expounded by Abul Fazl in his introduction to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, vide : Text pp-3-4, Blochmann's Tr., Abul Fazl's preface, pp-4-5.

<sup>2</sup> loc. cit.

The greatest and most important factor by which it was tempered, controlled and kept in proper balance was the force of popular feeling, the demand and needs of the people and the spirit of the age. The medium through which the sovereign kept himself in touch with the sentiments and interests of the people were ministers whose duty was, not only to execute the orders and decrees of the sovereign but to serve as a link between the sovereign and the subjects and to render to the former proper and beneficial counsel and guidance. Abul Fazl refers to this as one of the primary qualities of sovereignty when he says : 'In his wisdom the king will understand the spirit of the age, and shape his plans accordingly.'<sup>1</sup> Equally important was the restraint imposed by the established practices, customs and traditions of the people as well as the preceiding political institutions. These had to be given due consideration so far as practicable. Thirdly, the sovereign had to depend on the quality and character of both his civil and military nobility on the one hand and the class of the theologians on the other. The influence of these classes would, of course, vary in proportion to their comparative capabilities.

These factors wielded a far reaching influence on the sovereign's authority. Nevertheless there was no constitutional agency of popular control over the policy or the administrative measures of the king except by petitioning or by rebellion, against tyranny and injustice, or for the sake of enforcing a popular demand.

But apart from their legal position and the actual limitations on the autocracy of the Mughal sovereigns, the nature of their government was moulded and determined by the characters of the sovereigns themselves. The Mughal rulers were well-known for their deep concern for the welfare and happiness of their subjects. It was not their object only to use the people and their resources for their personal enjoyment. They encouraged all the arts of peace.

<sup>1</sup>Biochmann and Philloft, p. 3.

Hence the Mughal government was an enlightened despotism.

*Conditions of the Durability of Akbar's rule.*—At the time of his accession the young king was not only surrounded by many foes but was also faced by the feelings of uncertainty and suspicion which the people naturally have against a new conqueror. The Mughals were regarded as usurpers. But Akbar, his very young age notwithstanding, did not take long in allaying all popular apprehensions and winning the confidence and good-will of his subjects. Early in the reign he commenced a policy of religious equality and of reconciling the warrior class of Hindus. He respected their time-honoured religious customs, although true to his character as an undaunted social reformer, he shrank not from launching forth a bold programme of social reforms even at the risk of offending the religious susceptibilities of the superstitious Hindus. But social reform was the crying need of the age and in his courageous, all-round programme of reforms Akbar had the sympathy and co-operation of the better minds among the people. In the field of administration Akbar fully respected the immortal village autonomy. The innumerable little republics in the villages had constituted, since ancient times, the very core and foundation of government in India. The argus-eyed king realised the worth and value of every important community and institution, social, political or religious, and shaped the policy of his government accordingly. He was indeed a true representative of an age which was profoundly stirred by a spirit of rationalism and restoration to man his right of self-knowledge and self-determination.

*Scope and functions of Mughal Government.*—It would be idle and unhistorical to attempt to discover in the Mughal government as wide and comprehensive a scope of its activities as we find in the modern State of which the scope of operation has become far wider and tends to grow still wider so as to dominate practically the whole life of the social man.

The functions of the government were both constituent and ministrant. It provided for the protection of the country from external aggression and for the security of the life and property of its subjects. It raised its revenues by an efficient and unoppressive system, always keeping in view the well-being and prosperity of the peasantry as the primary concern of the government. It provided the best means of communication available in that age, built roads, sarais, wells, alms-houses, and planted trees for the comfort and convenience of merchants and travellers. Although there were no specialised departments of education, medical relief or even public works, in the modern sense, these functions of the government did not suffer by default. The government opened seminaries, hospitals and houses of charity in all important centres, and gave aids to many such institutions, maintained by private enterprise, of which there was a net-work over the whole country.

*The policy of government analysed.*—Thus the policy of Akbar may be clearly observed to consist of the following main factors:

1. Extending legal and civic equality, that is to say, *giving equal rights of citizenship to all subjects* of the state,<sup>1</sup> and thus creating confidence in the minds of the people.

2. Reconciliation and be-friending of the warrior class by following the policy of extending the hand of friendship to them all, and subjugating them by persuasion if possible, and by compulsion if necessary.

Scholars have curiously failed to grasp the true spirit and character of Akbar's religious policy. They have only assigned it the negative virtue of tolerance. His policy, however, as a closer study will unmistakably reveal, sprang from the ideal that every man who was a subject of the state, *was as a human being*, entitled to enjoy full rights of citizenship. It did not arise from that expediency which dictated toleration of non-Muslims as a necessary evil. Akbar's religious policy was the result of the moral conviction that all men are equal in the eye of God and consequently of his Deputy on Earth, viz., the king, while that of others, was a political necessity.

3. Ensuring the general progress and happiness of the people by establishing peace and security and an efficient and just administration.

4. Ameliorating the general lot of the people by introducing and encouraging social, economic and other necessary reforms.

5. Encouraging and patronising cultural and literary activities.

*Sher Shah: How far precursor of Akbar.*—A great deal of confusion and misconception has been caused by the recent tendency of certain writers to go so far in their laudation of Sher Shah's political achievements as to credit him with the initiation and rearing up of all those institutions, and policies, which, they opine and affirm, have come to be undeservedly attributed to Akbar. A proper and correct appraisal of Sher Shah's contribution towards the building up of Mughal institutions and the shaping of Akbar's policy, therefore, seems necessary.

Sher Shah's contribution may be seen in two directions, firstly, in establishing, in practice, though not in theory, the new principle of monarchy which the Turks (Mughals) imported into the land, and secondly, in restoring peace, and security and popular confidence by a benevolent and enlightened government and by making the administrative system efficient, stable and strong.

The Afghan monarchy was based on the conception that the kingdom was tribal property and also that every member of the tribe had a right to become king. Every one in the community was equal, the king being only a *primus inter pares*. Sher Shah did nothing to alter or modify this principle in the least. But as has been said above, by establishing a strong central government and making the authority of the ruler obeyed by even the mightiest Afghan chiefs he prepared the ground for the acceptance and popular recognition of the new principle of Turkish Monarchy. He yoked power and privilege to duty and responsibility. He made every Afghan chief clearly understand that with his privileges and authority went also equally important



duties and responsibilities, a loyal and worthy performance of which would be the *sine qua non* of his enjoying his privileges. Should any one, however high and mighty his office and station, be found remiss in the performance of duties, his remissness, whether conscious or unconscious, would bring on him the wrath of the king and would never go unpunished. Islam Shah carried this policy still further. He was a very strict disciplinarian and shattered the arrogance of Afghan nobility with a ruthless hand and even by imposing on them the rather humiliating ceremonial of doing obeisance to his slippers every week in an assembly of government officials. Thus the contribution of the two Sur monarchs consists in establishing and strengthening traditions of obedience and loyalty to the throne. But it should be remembered that they did nothing to alter or modify the fundamental conception of Afghan monarchy.

The second and more conspicuous contribution of Sher Shah was in repairing and breathing new life and vigour into the administrative structure which, on his accession to power, he found to be in a tottering condition without cohesion, unity or moral basis. His eagle eye missed no branch or aspect of government, however, insignificant, and his stupendous energy left none of them untouched. He repaired, improved, organised and perfected every single department of the state with admirable skill and expedition. Peace, security and prosperity in the land, and confidence in the intentions and ability of the king followed his foot-steps. His long personal experience joined to an adequate measure of innate political farsight did not allow his administrative policy to be marred by religious narrowness and intolerance. Thus he bequeathed to his successors the legacy of a thoroughly well-organised administrative structure and traditions of a just and tolerant policy, as the essential conditions of a durable and good government. But though a powerful and strong administrator, Sher Shah was no constructive political genius. It was not given to him to introduce any new or original schemes or ideas or try new experiments, far less a new philosophy of State. Nor did

his policy of government emerge from that deep moral and intellectual conviction which brought about a radical change in the policy of the government under Akbar. Sher Shah's religious toleration emerged solely from considerations of political expediency. There were two opposite courses open to him and two ideals to follow—either the policy that had been followed by Sikandar Lodi and the ideal of religious bigottedness and persecution of non-Muslims as enjoined by the Muslim divines and theologians, or the benevolent policy, on the whole, of Ghiyas-uddin Tughlaq and an ideal born of that far-sighted and enlightened statesmanship which will not allow the peace and happiness and good-will of the people nor the solidarity and strength of the State to be sacrificed at the altar of a narrow and parochial policy of religious fanaticism and intolerance. Sher Shah gave evidence of his statesmanship by electing to follow the latter course. The occasional incidents of religious intolerance displayed by Sher Shah, mostly during his wars, are by no means indications of the general policy of his government. Sher Shah, set up in effect, a model type of enlightened despotism, with a vigorous programme of national reconstruction. But though in practice he established an equitable and just administration, he never did nor could change the legal and theoretical basis of the State. In theory the non-Muslims still occupied a position of inferiority. They did not enjoy equal civic status with the Muslims. Thus Akbar's policy was grounded on a radically different conception of the State.

*The Central Government*—To begin with there was no alternative but for Akbar to adopt and work the system which he found in vogue at his accession. But he was not the man to rest on his oars. Very early in the reign when he was still quite young he introduced measures of religious and social reforms which showed clearly the originality of his mind and the breadth of his outlook. Later far reaching and elaborate improvements were made and new experiments tried from time to time in almost every branch of administration. We shall refer to these in their proper places.

The Central Structure of Akbar's government consisted of the king and his ministers. The council of ministers was by no means stable or legally binding on the king. In theory it was no more than an advisory body. It depended entirely on his sweet will for its existence. But both by historical experience and tradition and no less from political necessity, the existence of a body of ministers to assist and advise the ruler and to share his multifarious obligations, had become inevitable. No ruler could think of carrying on his administration successfully or even safely without the co-operation of the leading men of the country, viz., warriors, politicians, jurists, financiers and statesmen. And yet the king was the pivot of the whole machinery and the ultimate source of all earthly power which was limited only by the Law of the Qur'an. He had to keep his eye on every department of government.

Akbar followed a definite routine of work. He rose early in the morning and began by giving *gharokha darshan* to his subjects. This was followed by attending to the business of the House-hold department and the other state business. Some time was then devoted to the *harem* and to rest, after which the king transacted business in the *Diwan-i-Khas-o-Amn*. Here, besides the above mentioned business, petitions were heard, salaries were fixed, promotions were granted, and jagirs were bestowed. Some days were allotted to judicial work, when appeals were heard or even initial cases tried and decided. At other times distinguished visitors, ambassadors and rulers from other countries were received in this darbar. At other times again, prisoners of war, defeated foes and subdued rebels were also presented in it. The business of each department was presented by the ministers and secretaries concerned.

Night time was reserved for the most important business including the war council. To these meetings were admitted only the most trusted and highest ministers. These meetings were held in a private chamber close to the bed-room of the king, which later came to be called *Ghusabkhana*. Thus there were three meetings daily held for transacting govern-

ment business, and the regularity which was observed by the king in holding them not only contributed greatly towards increasing the efficiency and strength of the government but also its popularity among the subjects.

### *The Council of Ministers and Chief Departments of State.*

The principal ministers in Akbar's reign were,

1. The Wakil or Prime-minister.
2. The Vazir also called Diwan, or Finance minister.

3. The Mir Bakshi was responsible for a great variety of duties and functions, but was mainly concerned with the military department.

4. The Sadr-us-Sudur, was the highest ecclesiastical and judicial officer in the early part of Akbar's reign. He was also in charge of the department of charities, religious endowments and benefactions and was the supreme judge of the Empire. The office of the Chief Qazi seems to have been usually amalgamated with that of the Sadr-us-Sudur early in the reign. Later the duties of the Sadr were greatly curtailed by Akbar.

Besides these four highest ministers of the Mughal Empire certain other ministers enjoyed a status and importance only next to the former. The foremost of these was the *Mir-Samman* or *Khan-i-Saman*, who was like the Mayor of the Palace in European courts, and was in charge of the Household department which comprised not only the *harem* and its enormous contents but also of the various *karkhanas*, stores, the private expenditure of the Emperor and his kitchen and other sumptuary and sartorial arrangements.

*Foreign elements in the Mughal government.*—The Mughals were Turks by race and tradition, but Persian by training and culture. Having embraced Islam some centuries before they acquired the sovereignty of India, they had adopted the administrative system of the Abbasside Khalifat of Iraq, which served as a model for most

contemporary Muslim potentates. But in the military department the Turkish model was retained or more correctly speaking, adopted with the modifications and improvements which it had undergone in Persia, where it had been introduced as early as the 10th century. When they established themselves in India the Mughals found it necessary to retain and assimilate into their system many indigenous elements which had become rooted in the soil and had proved themselves most successful by long usage. Thus the administrative system of the Mughals may be said to represent an amalgam of Turko-Persian and Arabian elements in an Indian setting. The assimilation of the foreign elements may be observed in the principles and framework of the government, and the rules of taxation and the titles of the officials. But the details of the imported system were modified to suit local conditions. The existing Indian practice and the vast mass of Indian customary laws were respected so far as they did not run counter to the root principles of Islamic government. While the court and higher official circles were replicas of foreign Muslim Kingdoms, in the lower rungs of the official ladder and the village administration, the indigenous system and usages were allowed to continue. Similarly the old Indian land revenue system was recognised owing to its obvious advantages. But for the army the Turkish system served as the model.

*The Vakil and the Diwan.*—The power and jurisdiction of the Vakil and Diwan in the reign of Akbar cannot be stated with any degree of precision. No definite line of demarcation is possible to draw between the two, for the simple reason that the reign of Akbar was one of growth and evolution and of experimentation. Therefore we find that the scope of the functions and even the authority of the two ministers underwent considerable changes in course of time. The chief minister in the reign of Akbar came to be called Vakil (literally an agent or representative) because Bairam Khan who was the *Ataliq* of the young king, was in a way the substitute-king for nearly five years, and was hence called Vakil-i-Saltanat. His authority was greater even than that

of the grand Vazir as defined by the jurists of Islam. He appointed and dismissed the highest officers of the state and had full control over all the branches of administration, civil, military, executive and judicial. He exercised the power of capital punishment and indeed had assumed so much independence that he thought it unnecessary to refer to the king in any matter, treating him as a mere boy, not ripe enough to bear the onerous responsibilities of government.

But after the fall of Bairam Khan the young king asserted himself strongly. Shihab-ud-Din, governor of Dihli, was appointed to succeed him in 'political and financial affairs' but he was neither given the same authority nor honour. Since that time the vakils were changed at the will of the king, and some times very quickly. In the eighth year of reign the finance and revenue department was separated from the Vakil's charge and entrusted to a newly created minister known as *Divan*. Occasionally the charge of the finance department was entrusted to two ministers of equal rank. For instance, Raja Todar Mal and Khwaja Shah Mansur were made joint Divans for some time about the 23rd, year of reign. We also find that at one time the same man acted as Vakil and Divan once again, though for a short time only. Thus there were frequent changes in the scope of functions and duties entrusted to the two highest ministers. These changes were determined by a variety of causes and circumstances. Sometimes his absence from the capital was the occasion for the king to make a redistribution of portfolios just as he thought best. On other occasions, the abilities and qualifications of the persons concerned made redistribution necessary. To some extent the prestige and influence of the Vakil, just as of any other minister always varied according to the personal equation of the man, that is to say, his ability in governance and astuteness as a politician.

The above account of the variations which the Vakil's office underwent would also suggest an equally conspicuous change in the jurisdiction and influence of that officer. In the early part of Akbar's reign the Vakil was of course very powerful and held an extensive portfolio including political,

financial and revenue affairs and a general supervision of all other departments. But after some time, as we have noted above, the revenue and finance portfolio was separated and entrusted to another minister of equal rank, called the Divan or Vazir and the result of this was that the vakils were eclipsed by the divans. Under Akbar's successors the vakils' office became more and more sinecure and inconsequential, although occasionally it was held by men who enjoyed great influence and importance due to their personal status. On the other hand, it happened that for long periods the vakils' office was allowed to remain vacant, just as in the reign of Jahangir. Even when the office was filled the vakil enjoyed high rank, prestige and honour but hardly any power.

*The Divan or Vazir.*—In the Mughal period the word divan came to be synonymous with Vazir after having passed through a vast range of meanings from the register of records maintained in the financial department itself, etc., to the man in charge of that department. The only difference between the two terms was that the term Vazir was used only for a minister of the king while the officer-in-charge of revenue in the provinces as well as the financial managers of jagirdars and mansabdars too were all called divans.

During the reign of Akbar which lasted for half a century great improvements were effected in the organisation and working of the revenue department by his able financiers who held the post of divan. Among these the most notable were Muzaffar Khan, Shihab-uddin, Khwaja Shamshuddin and last but not the least, Raja Todar Mal, in some respects the greatest of them all. Since the time of the Abbaside Khalifas four ministers were regarded as the four pillars of the State and although their designations and even duties underwent many changes in course of time, the number of the chief ministers acquired a sort of traditional sanctity. The Divan was the most important of these four pillars on which the edifice of the state rested.

The Vazir issued orders to and supervised the work of the provincial divans. To his office were sent all papers relating to the revenue department, and he decided all matters

connected with the organisation, assessment, collection etc., of revenue. In Akbar's time the divans were also consulted by the emperor in matters of high state policy both of war and peace.

*The Mir Bakhshi*—*Bakhshi* is a term which seems to have been given wide currency<sup>1</sup> by the *Mughals*. Its origin is yet uncertain. Some scholars are of opinion that it is derived from the Buddhist word *Bhikshu* which in the Turkish language became *Bakhshi*, i.e., guru or perceptor.

The department of which the *Bakhshi* was the head had already become highly developed. Under the Sultans it was generally called the *Divan-i-arz*. It was mainly concerned with the recruitment, maintenance, training and inspection of the army besides the organising of marches of the army and the royal camp during a campaign. The *Bakhshi* did all this work in addition to signing and passing the acquittance rolls and salary bills of the soldiers and all rank-holders or mansabdars. It should be noted that because almost all services under the Mughal government were organised on a military basis all orders of appointment, including even those of the *Vakil*, *Vazir* or *Sadr* had to pass through the *Bakhshi*. All high officers coming from provinces were presented to the king by the *Bakhshi*. He also presented the new candidates for appointment as well as old hands together with their horses for inspection by the king. He was also an important member of the king's privy council which, as explained above, was held in the *Ghusalkhana*. Although the *Bakhshi* had charge of the whole army, the artillery was placed in charge of the *Mir Atish* or *Darogha-i-Topkhana*.

*The Sadr-us-Sudur (Chief Sadr)*—According to Muslim law it is the duty of the king to protect and propagate the *Shariat* or the religious law and to see that the subjects of the kingdom do not violate it. For this purpose it was necessary to appoint an officer who should be well versed in law. In the early Muslim states this officer was called

<sup>1</sup>There is a reference to the existence of *Bakhshis* in the time of Sikandar Lodi—vide *Lodi*, Elliot, II, 457.



the Sadr or Sadr-i-jahan, as he was supposed to be the most distinguished scholar of the Shariat.

His duties as the religious head of the kingdom were threefold : (1) He was to keep a watch over the educational and moral progress of the people and to exercise a sort of censorship over the conduct of Musalmans. If he found any thing remiss in their conduct or any lapse from the performance of religious injunctions, he could either punish them himself or advise the king to do so. (2) As the greatest authority on Islamic law he was also the head of the judiciary. The officers of this department throughout the empire were appointed either directly by him or on his recommendation. (3) He was the head of the Department of Charities. It was on his recommendation that suitable stipends, in the form of suyrghals or in cash were granted to deserving persons who either led a life of piety and seclusion or were devoted to *belles lettres*.

According to the 'Ain, the following four classes of men were considered to be entitled to such grants and charities, (1) enquirers after wisdom who have withdrawn from all worldly occupation and spend their whole time in search of knowledge. (2) Such as toil and practise self-denial, and have renounced the society of men. (3) such as are weak and poor. (4) honourable men of gentle birth who from want of

knowledge are unable to earn their livelihood.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Muslim law the principal qualification for a sadr was knowledge of the sacred law, but under Akbar greater emphasis was laid on his being a man of liberal outlook and views so that he may be at peace with all classes of men.<sup>2</sup> In the pre-Mughal period the sadr enjoyed great authority and dignity. It was the sadr, whose edict legalised the *julus* or accession of a new king. Under Akbar too some of the early sadrs, especially Shaikh Abdun-

<sup>1</sup> Blochmanns Tr. of 'Ain, New Ed., revised by D. C. Phillott, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

nabi, wielded great influence and power. They were the highest law officers of the empire. They were in charge of all land devoted to ecclesiastical and benevolent purposes, and possessed an almost unlimited authority of conferring such lands, independently of the king. But when the emperor discovered that they were all open to great corruption and bribery, he clipped their powers drastically. But perhaps the more important cause which led to the downfall of the sadr and indeed of the entire Ulema class was their extremely narrow and intolerant views and their utter incapacity to rise up to and co-operate with the emperor's liberal policy. They could not swallow his policy of widening the scope of charities and grants so as to include all classes of men. To attain this object Akbar deprived the Shaikhs and Sadrs of making any grants themselves. They were empowered only to enquire into deserving cases and commend them for the acceptance of the emperor. Another step by which the powers of Sadr were reduced was the creation of provincial sadrs in 1581. A. D.

As has already been mentioned, under Akbar the Sadr seems to have also acted usually as head of the Judiciary. There is no reference to the existence of a separate Chief (Qazi) under Akbar. His power in this sphere too, seems to have substantially suffered by the personal attention of the Emperor to judicial matters and his holding weekly courts for that purpose. The Shariat conceives the Khalifa to be the final authority in judicial matters also. But the practical problem arising from the fact that most Islamic rulers were not sufficiently conversant with the technicalities of Islamic law led to the necessity of appointing a person learned in the Law as the Chief Qazi of the realm. The jurists also felt obliged to lay down the appointment of a qazi as essential. References here and there are to be found of the existence of the Mir Adl and Mufti, but neither of the two seems to have been a regular officer. The Muhtasib who is also mentioned by the jurists as an important official of the Muslim state did not exist under Akbar. The duties of the Muhtasib were rather wide and comprised those performed by municipal and police authorities in modern times. The

Kotwal was more or less the substitute of the Muhtasib, during the Mughal period. The kotwal of a sarkar also presided over the criminal courts. His criminal jurisdiction will be discussed in its proper place, in this chapter. In addition to the sadr the king used to appoint a qazi-i-askar, or the qazi of the army. He was assisted in some cases by a mir-adl.

*The law, by which justice was administered.*—Civil law so far applied to the Muslims was entirely based on Islamic law. Criminal law was the same for all the subjects of the state, irrespective of their persuasion or community. So also the Muslim law of contract and evidence was applied to the Hindus as well. In cases of inheritance, marriage and the like, Hindu law was applied to the Hindus just as the Muslim law was applied to the Muslims. The application of Islamic law was further limited by leaving the ancient organisation with all its Hindu institutions intact.<sup>1</sup>

Akbar had taken a further step in ordering cases between the Hindus to be decided by the Hindus and not by the qazis. But the king and his Muslim law officers seem to have tried civil cases also excepting those concerned with inheritances, marriage etc., Also cases in which one party was Muslim and the other non-Muslim were tried by the judicial officers. In the law of evidence, particularly in criminal cases, much discretion was left to the presiding officers to choose for themselves the manner and method of getting at the truth.

*The Mir Saman*—Under Akbar the Mir Saman did not occupy a rank among the highest ministers. Subsequently his rank and dignity seem to have gradually appreciated. We learn from the 'Ain that all the officers of the household department, viz., the Mir Saman, the Nazir-i-Buyutat, (the Superintendent of the Imperial workshops) the Diwan-i-Buyutat (The Accountant of the Imperial workshops) were under the Diwan or Vazir.

The Bayutah comprised the state workshops and stores. The department dealt with the manufacture and storage of every article required by the emperor, from pearls and precious stones to armaments, from horses, camels, elephants etc., for the army, to beasts of burden, as also the camp equipment of the king.

*Other officers attached to the Central Government—*Among other officers of junior rank attached to the Imperial Government are mentioned by Abul Fazl the following :

The Mir Ala,<sup>1</sup> the Muhrdar,<sup>2</sup> the Bakhshi,<sup>3</sup> the Barbegi,<sup>4</sup> the Qurbegi,<sup>5</sup> the Mir Tozak,<sup>6</sup> the Mir Bahri,<sup>7</sup> the Mir-ban,<sup>8</sup> the Mir-Manzil,<sup>9</sup> the Khwan Salar,<sup>10</sup> the Munshi,<sup>11</sup> the Qush-begi,<sup>12</sup> the Akhta begi.<sup>13</sup>

*Nature and conditions of services—*Almost the whole of Upper Government services were organised on a military basis, that is to say their status, salaries, promotions and other conditions were adjudged and governed by military standards. It would, however, be wrong to conclude from this, as some foreign writers have done, that the paramount aim and object of the government was military and their chief business was that of recruiting forces and using them to keep the people under subjection and to realise the revenue. The aim of the Mughal government,

1 Perhaps an officer incharge of the Emperor's private purse.  
2 Keeper of the seal.  
3 Paymaster of the court.  
4 He was also called Mir Arz and was incharge of petitions and of presenting people at court.

5 Bearer of the Imperial insignia.

6 Master of ceremonies.

7 Admiral and Harbour Master-General.

8 Superintendent of the Imperial forests.

9 Quarter Master General of the Court. Akbar's Court was frequently on the move.

10 Superintendent of the Imperial kitchen.

11 Private Secretary.

12 Superintendent of Avaries.

13 Superintendent of the Stud.

and especially that of Akbar was certainly far more humane and nobler than this. The principal services of the state were organised on a military basis just as some important services, like the medical is and till lately the Engineering service was, governed by the military department under the British government in this country.

The subordinate staff, including clerks, office superintendents and the like were not recruited by the military department. They did not hold any mansabs or jagirs, and were paid cash salaries.

As regards qualifications for appointments to different posts no specific rules existed. Nor is it possible to find in the chronicles any information about the conditions of leave, pensions or retirements. Occasionally we find such indications of the qualifications demanded, as those mentioned by Abul Fazl in the case of divan, "He must be a skilful arithmetician, active in business, etc." Similarly it may be presumed, reasonable qualifications were expected of the lower officers. In theory all the superior appointments depended on the will of the emperor. In actual practice, however, the emperor invariably consulted his advisers and ministers, and only competent persons of proven worth and fitness were appointed. An elaborate formal procedure was followed in each case. Merit was in general the criterion for preferment, although there were certain exceptions. The lower appointments were made on the same general principle. Meritorious service in any branch never went unrewarded, in one shape or another, nor did inefficiency or deliberate dereliction of duty escape suitable punishment.

*The responsibilities of Ministers and check on their powers.*—As we have stated above although the yakil was in theory the chief minister of the empire under Akbar, in actual practice the Divan came to occupy the most important position and enjoyed the highest status. He may, however, be a mansabdār of much inferior rank and hence draw a much a lower salary. There are cases in which the Divan held only the rank of 1500 or 2000 zat. This

showed that the salary and rank of a person would not prevent his elevation to the highest post in the empire if he was found fit to hold it. His distinction was the office he held and not his rank.

Next in status to the chief Divan was the Mir-Bakhshi. By the very nature of his duties the Bakhshi would have had to work constantly in co-operation and co-ordination with the Divans' office and many important papers had to be signed by both the ministers in order to be considered complete. The minister next in status mentioned by Abul Fazl was the Sadr.

Due restraint on the use of their powers by the higher officers was exercised in a variety of ways. Firstly, the ministers had mostly to work jointly and not severally. Secondly, whenever the emperor felt the necessity of tightening the control he used to appoint certain officers not connected with the Central government to watch the administration of any department.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, Akbar started the practice of opening the king's councils to officers and nobles other than ministers, in which all matters concerning general administration, military affairs, and topics of more general and academic interest were discussed. This practice also exercised a great check on the powers and policies of ministers.

*The Military System.*—The army of the Sultans of Delhi since Firoz Shah (Tughlaq) was mostly composed of a rabble indifferently recruited with no regular inspection, discipline or training. Sher Shah had therefore, to re-organise the military too like other departments of government. He reformed and regularised recruitment and re-introduced the branding system and muster roll, i.e., inspection of troops. His total army consisted of over three lakhs of cavalry, one lakh infantry, five thousand elephants and a very strong artillery.

The *mansabdari* system too seems to have existed in a rudimentary stage, but it was confined to officers only. *Mansabdars* of between 500 to 20,000 horses are frequently

<sup>1</sup> Vide Ibn Hisham, 296.

purpose of revenue collection.

The *mansabdars* were divided into sixty grades from ten to 10,000, but *mansabs* of above 5000 were reserved for princes royal. At first Akbar had devised only one class or grade of the various *mansabs*. But towards the end of his reign he introduced three grades in each of the ranks (*mansabs*) from 5000 downwards with a view to making further distinctions in the status of mansabdars without increasing the number of their contingents or other obligations of service. This further gradation was made by means of introducing an additional rank known as Sawar, the original one being called Zat. Officers whose Sawar rank was equal to their Zat rank were of first grade, those whose Sawar rank was equal to half or more were of 2nd grade, and those of whose Sawar rank was less than half of his Zat belonged to the third grade. There was also some difference in their emoluments. The significance of Zat and Sawar is a highly controversial question and still remains undecided and obscure. But the view that the Sawar rank was introduced to indicate only a distinctive honour carrying no obligation to maintain the number of horse indicated by it, seems to be nearer the truth than any other view.

The main arm of the Mughal Army was the cavalry. The second important arm was the artillery. The infantry comprised a heterogeneous mass of matchlockmen, archers, swordsmen, lance-bearers, etc., and all manner of menial servants attached to the regular troops. The Mughals had no navy. A flotilla of boats was, however, maintained to ply in the rivers, mainly with the purpose of transporting armies during the rainy season when many rivers were in spate and greatly hampered the movement of land forces making it altogether impossible.

In addition to this, a calculation of the capacity of each province to supply cavalry, that is to say, real fighting force, as well as, infantry, elephants etc. was made probably on the basis of population. These forces were in the nature of a militia and not a standing army. Their number amount-

ted to nearly 4 lakhs of cavalry and 42 lakhs of infantry.<sup>1</sup>

*Supervision and control of the army.*—To maintain a high standard of efficiency and loyalty in the army suitable steps were taken. First Bitikchis (clerks) of the army department were entrusted with the work of preparing descriptive rolls of the soldiers. Their marks of identification, size, etc. as well as their residence, parentage, race, were all to be registered.

The horses were to be branded. After trying a number of signs for branding, finally numerals were adopted. The soldiers had to gather regularly at a muster roll for inspection by the Bakhshi or some other superior officer.

*Nature of Mughal services.*—Practically all services, excepting the ecclesiastical and religious posts were organised on a military basis and were recruited, paid and controlled according to the conditions of the military department. But that does not imply that the spirit of the government was military. A modern counterpart of these services is to be seen in the medical department in which the Imperial grade services all belong to the military department, but in peace-times, the members of the service are translated to districts to serve as civil surgeons. Exactly in the same manner all civilians were legally military men, but in normal times they worked in the different civil departments of the state.

*The Revenue System.*—According to Abul Fazl the revenue raised by the king was in the nature of wages of the king in consideration for the service of administration and protection that he rendered to the people. While certain religious taxes, either imported by the early Muslim rulers from the Persian system or imposed by them on non-Muslims, continued to be levied until Sher Shah's reign, most of them were abolished by Akbar soon after his accession. Land revenue was the principal source of state income. But there were other sources of income such as

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of this question see 'Provincial Government of the Mughals', pp. 259 et seq.



customs, internal transit duties, ferry taxes, octroi collected in important cities only, mints, indemnities and monopolies, abwabs or illegal cesses enforced by local officers. Many of these including even port duties were remitted by Akbar. Besides these, presents, fines, and war-booty were also sources of some income.

*System of Assessment.*—Before Sher Shah's time two systems of land revenue assessment obtained viz., sharing (Batai, Ghalla Bakhshi) and sharing by estimate (Kankut, Muqti or Nasq)<sup>1</sup>. Sher Shah introduced the Zabti, or measurement system wherever possible.

Under the incapable successors of Islam Shah Suri the system of Sher Shah also considerably suffered although the intrinsic durability of his structure kept the essentials of the system alive. Upon Akbar devolved the task of reorganising and perfecting it in every detail and the young king was fully alive to the importance of finance as the basis and prop of the state. The first twenty four years of the reign therefore witnessed a series of experiments and improvements, with a view to attaining an assessment so perfect as to render the estimate of crops as accurate as possible and to minimise the chances of oppression or defalcation by the public servants and fraud by the cultivators. Finally the incessant efforts of the emperor and his financial experts established what has been commonly misunderstood as the ten-year system, but was really a schedule of rates based on the average yield of the preceeding ten years.

The start was made by continuing Sher Shah's system as described in detail by Abul Fazl in the Ain. As stated above Sher Shah had brought the greater part of Hindustan under a system of measurement which was probably repeated every season. The area under cultivation in respect of different crops having been ascertained, certain scheduled rates were applied to

<sup>1</sup>For a full discussion of the significance of these terms see Prov. Govt., App. B.

them and the revenue realised accordingly. The schedules of the average yield of each holding were prepared by dividing all kinds of crops into three broad classes, good, middling and bad and working out their mean. In this way the average yield per bigha of each crop was worked out and one-third of this average was the state-demand. The share of the government might then be commuted into cash at the current rates.

But in the actual working of the system a great confusion had arisen and hence as early as 1565 Muzaffar Khan Turbati was instructed to reform the system so as ensure greater honesty in realisations and more equitable and fair treatment to the ryot. But soon it was realised that the system was still open to many abuses and gave a rather free hand to the government employees to oppress the people. Consequently in 1568 Shihab-uddin, Governor of Malwa, was appointed Vazir to reorganise the system. He tried another experiment, though only as a temporary measure. The yearly survey and assessment was done away with and the system called Nasq was established over the whole empire. This system implied a method of fixing the shares of the peasant and the government by a general appraisal of the crops while it was still standing.

A third time in 1570-71, Muzaffar Khan Turbati and Raja Todar Mal prepared a revised assessment of the land revenue based on estimates framed by the local qanungos and checked by ten superior qanungos at head quarters. "Thus," to quote Edwards and Garrett, "for the first time since the establishment of the Mughal power, was the local knowledge of the old hereditary revenue officials employed in determining the state demand."

The next experiment was the famous systematic survey of Gujrat carried out by Raja Todar Mal in 1573. This came to be known as Todar Mal's Bandobast. It formed the basis of the survey system over various other parts of the empire. Todar Mal by thus reducing to a negligible minimum the possibility of abuse of power by the revenue officials, rendered a lasting service to the peasantry. He

amply deserves the appreciation of Lane-Poole : 'There is no name in medieval history more renowned in India to the present day than that of Todar Mal, and the reason is that nothing in Akbar's reforms more nearly touched the welfare of the people than the great financier's reconstruction of the revenue system.'

*The Karori System.*—Akbar, however, in his ambition to bring the whole empire under a uniform system tried another experiment in 1575-76. A fresh assessment was made and the empire, with the exception of Bihar, Bengal and Gujrat, was divided into equal fiscal units each yielding a revenue of one crore of dams or 250,000 rupees. This experiment was found impracticable and was soon abandoned, although the title of *karori* continued to be used for a collector of government dues.

The final and most enduring arrangement was the so-called 'Ten Year Settlement', which was introduced in the 24th year of reign in those parts of the empire which could be brought under the survey or the *Zabti* system. In the remaining parts the other two viz., *Ghalla Bakhshi* in its several forms, and *Nasq*, continued to prevail. A word may now be said in explanation of each of the three systems.

*Zabti*—This was also called *Paimaish* (meaning measurement or survey). As stated above, schedules were prepared of the average yield of each holding with respect to each crop grown on it, on the basis of an average of the produce of previous ten years. The lands under actual cultivation were then surveyed and records prepared for every crop, and one-third of the average of each crop recorded in government schedules was realized from the peasant. In this system the peasant knew what he had to pay and there was no chance either for him to deceive the government or for the officials to oppress him. *Ghalla-bakhshi*, also called *Batai* or *Bhaoli*, and later *Ghalla gismi*, was the simplest and easiest to work. Hence it naturally left enough loopholes for abuse of privilege and power on both sides. In it the crop, when harvested, was divided

between the peasant and the agents of the government either by making three equal heaps roughly or by actual weighing.

*Nasq*—A great obscurity hangs round the exact implication of this system, and it has occasioned a good deal of controversy among scholars. But as I have tried to show elsewhere *Nasq*, at any rate, during Akbar's reign, was synonymous with *muqtei* and *kankut* which signified a method of compounding or arriving at an agreement between the peasant and the government by means of a general estimate of the expected yield of the crop while still standing. Once this was agreed upon by both the parties, the government could realise one-third of the yield agreed upon<sup>1</sup>.

*Provision against unforeseen mishaps*—Should any sudden calamity, such as frost or drought or too much rain, or insect pest, destroy the crops in any locality, a report of the same was to be made duly endorsed by responsible officers, and on its basis remissions of revenue were made in proportion to the injury or loss sustained by the victim.

*Sundry reforms concerning the agencies of the revenue administration*—The surveyors and measurers of land previously worked under a contract system, receiving 58 dams for measuring 200 bighas at least in rabi, and 250 in kharif season. This was found unsatisfactory. In order to insure greater honesty and accuracy Akbar raised their wages to one dam per bigha. But at the same time all sorts of arbitrary imposts called *jihat*, *faruat*, (i.e., tax on manufactures, and extra-collections) were strictly forbidden.

Next came the reform and standardisation of linear and superficial measures. The various kinds of *gaz* which were in use previously were all abolished and a standard *gaz* of 41 digits was established all over. The *tanab* or *jarib* and the *bigha* were similarly made to conform to a fixed standard.

<sup>1</sup>See 'Prov. Government of the Mughals', pp. 300-309 and Appendix B, p. 453 et. seq.

In order to avoid inaccuracy in survey, tanabs made of bamboos joined by iron rings were substituted in place of the flexible hampen or rope jaribs.

*Classification of Lands*—The measurement of land having been carried out, the next important step in assessment was the classification of lands. This was based on the continuity or otherwise of cultivation, and divided the land under four classes: (1) Polaj, land continuously cultivated, (2) Paranti, land left fallow for a year or two in order to recover its strength. (3) Chachar, land that has lain fallow for three or four years. (4) Banjar, land uncultivated for five years or more.

One-third of the average yield of the first two classes was the land revenue to be paid. Chachar and banjar land were progressively taxed until in the 5th year they became as polaj.

As the revenue was assessed on the basis of the actual yield of each crop and was not in the form of a money-rent or tax fixed for a certain period or for ever, the produce of each crop and consequently the amount of tax to be realised varied in respect of each. Abul Fazl has given the rates of many kinds of crops worked out for a period of nineteen years, on polaj land. This points to the existence of a 'gigantic statistical office', to use the words of V. A. Smith.

*The Incidence of taxation*—The government share of the revenue was fixed at one-third of the actual yield and the peasants were given the option of paying either in cash or kind, excepting either the decayable crops such as vegetables or fruits, or the finer kinds such sugar cane, poppy or indigo for which cash payments were obligatory. 'There was no eviction for default', as is affirmed by Sarkar,<sup>1</sup> 'no starvation of the peasantry (except when there was a local famine, with no communication with the more fruitful parts of the country)'. Country-wide and man-made famines, which are a feature of modern times were unknown in those times. 'In the early and medieval times, the peasant was left in his

<sup>1</sup> Mughal Administration. (3rd edition) p. 78.

holding and left with enough to feed him (except when the entire harvest failed). The old custom of payment by the division of the crop was an advantage to him, as the payment depended on the actual harvest of the year, unlike the modern money rent which is an amount fixed irrespective of the yield in different years.' The land under the Mughal rulers was regarded as the property of the peasant and was never claimed by the sovereign to be his, as has been wrongly supposed by most writers on the subject. The land revenue was in the nature of a tax, and not rent.

*Nature of Akbar's settlement.*—Concerning the nature of the settlement made by Todar Mal, a most learned revenue expert, Mr. Wilton Oldham says; "From a careful perusal of the 'Ayeen Akbery,' I think it certainly proved that Akbar's revenue system was *ryot waree*; and that the actual cultivators of the soil were the persons responsible for the annual payment of the fixed revenue."<sup>1</sup> 'The 'settlement' was not made either with farmers of the revenue, as was afterwards done in Bengal by Lord Cornwallis, or with the headmen of the villages, as in the modern settlements of the United Provinces.'<sup>2</sup> The headman's part was that he was expected to assist in the assessment and collection of revenue and whenever he did so he was allowed a remuneration of  $\frac{1}{10}$ th of the produce or its value. In special cases he was rewarded according to the measure of his services.<sup>3</sup>

*Revenue collection in assigned lands.*—Although Akbar at one time tried to resume all *jagirs* and convert them into reserved lands, he found that complete abolition of *jagirs* was not possible. On the other hand the method of assigning *jagirs* carrying an income equal to the remuneration of the assignee was an easier way of disbursement of salaries. But the assessment and fixing of the revenue due from all lands was made directly by the government and the assignee, whatever his position or *mansab*, was authorised

<sup>1</sup> Memoir of the District of Ghazipur, Part I, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> V. A. Smith's Akbar, the Great Mughal, p. 375.

<sup>3</sup> Jarrett, pp. 44-48.

to realise through his own agents, not a farthing more than the amount fixed by the government.

*Condition of the peasantry under Akbar's settlement.*—Some foreign writers, Smith being the most conspicuous of them, hold the opinion that 'so much seems clear that the assessment was severe, and that large remissions must have been necessary in unfavourable times. There is absolutely no warrant for this statement. Smith approves of the creation of a landlord class under the modern government, whose existence was not recognised by 'Akbar, and which step has, he avers, encouraged great development of cultivation. This is, however, highly doubtful, if not altogether baseless. He then proceeds to make a still more unwarranted and extremely unfair statement, viz., that Akbar left the cultivator as much of the crops as was considered necessary for tolerable existence, and took the rest for the State.' We have no space here to discuss this question at length, but considering the general economic condition of the village population under the Zamindari and Taluqdari systems which are the creation of modern times, there can be no two opinions about the obvious fact that their financial condition could not have been worse than it has become since the introduction of this system, and that under Akbar the peasants were infinitely more well provided for and well-fed than now.

*The judiciary.*—It has been already stated that the king was the final judicial authority and the highest court of appeal. Next to him was the Chief Sadr who was also Chief Qazi usually. Under them in the provinces, sarkars, parganahs, towns and even in important villages there used to be Qazis. In the province the Governor and the Divan both exercised some judicial authority but probably their courts were only appellate courts for criminal and revenue cases respectively.

In the sarkar the Kotwal acted as magistrate trying criminal cases and the Qazi tried civil and religious cases. In the parganah, besides the Qazi, the Shiqqdar as well as the Amil exercised some semi-police cum judicial powers over

criminals and dangerous and lawless persons.

A detailed account of the legal procedure may not be given here. It may suffice, however, to observe that all necessary steps were taken to arrive at the truth.

The Mughal system like all other Medieval systems of justice was comparatively of a rough and ready kind. Nor was it backed by a legal system of such ponderous learning and volume as the present one. Both the law and the judicial system were much simpler. This circumstance had its merits as well as demerits. It gave much latitude and discretion to the judges, and was much quicker. In the hands of corrupt and unscrupulous officers such powers would naturally cause considerable injustice and oppression. This was, however, minimised by the various devices of check and control which worked quite efficiently under strong and benevolent rulers, and the government officers were deterred from doing injustice by the fear of dire consequences, should the superior officers or the emperor come to know of their misconduct. The efficiency of the system therefore varied according to the capability, prestige and watchfulness of the ruler. On the other hand such a system was bound to be more human and flexible, not rigid and mechanical. While it afforded more chance for injustice and oppression, it also offered sufficient scope for the play of the human elements of sympathy, understanding and even mercy. But the intrinsic merit of the system was that it did not suffer from the notorious 'law's delays' of the present system to which must be added the equally notorious and insufferable corruption of the law-courts and the crushing expensiveness of the whole process, which only serve to ruin the winner and loser both. Another noticeable feature of the Mughal judicial system was that unlike the present system it did not provoke and encourage litigation, and hence the volume of litigation in those days was comparatively far less.

In the event of high public servants being the accused, investigation was carried out by commissions consisting of high grandees of state especially appointed for the purpose.



There were regular prisons for criminals known as Bandi-khanas. The treatment of criminals in prisons was quite human and in some cases all necessary things for a comfortable life could be obtained as we know from the accounts of contemporary European travellers.

*Education and Public health.*—Traditionally the Muslim rulers did not directly concern themselves with the education of the people with the exception of encouraging and helping learned men and their seminaries by giving them pensions and grants. Occasionally some colleges and schools were also opened by the king in important towns. But Akbar's exceptionally enlightened mind made an earnest effort to lay down rules of teaching and a course of subjects which he regarded as essential for every man to study, including the three R's, history, medicine etc. This curriculum was adopted in schools and the Hindus and Muslims were seen for the first time to study secular subjects side by side under the same teacher.

Besides the public buildings which constituted the most important and expensive branch of public works, Akbar was responsible also for the construction of a number of works of public utility and benefit. Among these may be mentioned roads, tanks, wells, reservoirs, lakes, public and medical baths, hospitals both for men and animals, where medicines were distributed free, dams, ferries, bridges, walls and gates. There was also a system of posts and although we do not know whether the government department could be utilised for carrying private dak, we know for certain that it was transmitted without obstruction or difficulty, by means of well-organised private agencies.

## CHAPTER V

# POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE MUGHALS

(PROVINCIAL)

### Evolution of the Provinces

*Political divisions prior to Muslim conquest*—On the eve of Muslim conquest India, politically viewed, bore the aspect of a congeries of mutually warring but otherwise stagnant and unprogressive states. Although the Ghaznavides annexed only the province of Lahore leaving the Hindu chiefs of the interior an opportunity to modify their political ideals and outlook they remained exactly where they had been for centuries and after the lapse of close upon a century and three quarters, the Ghurids found them no better than the Ghaznavi invaders had done, and the self-same story of several invasions year after year was repeated, with the only difference that the Ghurids made their conquest permanent by founding the Sultanate of Dihli. Almost the entire Northern India passed under the sway of the conquerors within a little over a decade, but it was conquered piecemeal by his slave military leaders who came in the train of Shihabuddin Ghuri. The Southern half of India, however, including the Deccan and far South, was overrun and mostly subjugated towards the end of the 13th century, while the conquest of whatever remained was completed by Muhammad bin Tughlaq.

*Political divisions under the Dilhi Sultanate*—The Sultanate of Dilhi thus, within nearly a century and a quarter came to hold sway over the whole country from the extreme north to the south and from west to east. In its early stages the empire was a mere collection of semi-independent provinces each under the rule of the warrior who had conquered it or his successors owning a nominal allegiance to the Sultan. Subsequently the Khalji and Tughlaq Sultans essayed to organise the Empire and to divide it into a num-

ber of provinces, variously known as Tarafs, Iqtas, Wilayats, etc. These divisions were presumably determined only by considerations of expediency or geographical convenience. Their boundaries were seldom marked out with any degree of precision. When the Delhi Sultanate broke up, the ancient natural divisions which more or less represented the provinces of the empire, became independent kingdoms. The remnant of the Sultanate was only one of these having lost all her former prowess and predominance. Some of these kingdoms became the nuclei of the future provinces of the Mughal Empire, such as Gujrat, Malwa, Bengal, Khandesh. It should be noted, however, that in the north the sway of the Sultans was limited to the confines of the plain of Hindustan, while the hill region of the north remained entirely independent and outside the empire.

*Condition prior to Mughal conquest*—The kingdoms which existed at that time fall into four well defined groups. Enclosed within the valleys of the Himalayas there was a ring of ancient chiefships which, until the Mughal conquest remained entirely unaffected by the politics of Hindustan. Their geographical position proved their salvation. The foremost of these was the ancient kingdom of Kashmir whose political boundaries were clearly and permanently defined by nature. It had ever retained its distinctive identity even when it was a part of the empires of Asoka and Kanishka.

Muslim rule was established in Kashmir by the usurper Shah Mirza of Swat, in 1339 A.D. The kingdom, however, still maintained an isolated and independent existence for nigh on two centuries and a half when it was conquered and finally annexed by Akbar in 1589. Besides Kashmir, the largest and the most enchanting of them all, there are other valleys enclosed by the Himalayan ranges, such as the Hazara, Swat and Bajaur, Kangra, Kullu, Siwalak and Dehra Valleys, the Garhwal-Rohilkhand Valley; Nepal, Bhutan, Darjeeling and Assam Valleys. Every one of these valleys has been since time immemorial the cradle of independent kingdoms which became the nuclei of separate political

divisions whenever the whole region came under the rule of one king. Thus the whole Himalayan belt represented a series of kingdoms which remained autonomous even during the Mughal period and successfully resisted all attempts to conquer them, although some of them gradually acknowledged nominal suzerainty of the Mughals.

South of this region the plains of 'Hindustan', excluding Rajputana, were parcelled out among Muslim Kingdoms. Commencing from Sindh and Multan in the extreme west and making a North easterly curve, this group comprised Lahore, North-east of Multan, practically independent; then south east of Lahore the sorry remnant of the Sultanate of Delhi, and further east, Bengal. Along the southern boundary of the plains of Hindustan lay the kingdoms of Khandesh, Gujrat and Malwa, besides the minor chiefships of the hilly region of central India, known as Bundelkhand and Bagelkhand. Between these two belts of Muslim kindoms on the western side, lay Rajputana, like a huge wedge, as it were, 'deathless and indomitable', itself divided among a number of chiefships but rallying round the leadership of the house of Chittor which had, at that time, risen to the premier position among them.

It is not easy to determine the precise limits of these kingdoms and provinces because their boundaries were constantly shifting. The provinces of Sindh, Multan and the Punjab, virtually independent, covered the desert west of Rajputana up to the mouth of the Indus, including the region between the Indus and Jhelum, up to a little above Multan, as far as the frontier of Gakkhar land. The Punjab or the province of Lahore was bounded on the west by the upper course of the Indus stretching eastwards as far as the Sutlaj which formed its eastern boundary. On its north lay Kashmir and on the south Rajputana. Next to Lahore lay the much dwindled Delhi Empire, representing the dominions proper of the Lodi sultans. The Lodis had succeeded in recovering the country as far as Bihar in the east, Marwar in the West and Chanderi and Raisin in the south. The last addition was

Gwalior made by Ibrahim Lodi. But this was the climax to be followed soon by decay and disruption. Lahore became independent under Daulat Khan Lodi, and Bihar under Darya Khan Lohani whose son and successor Bahadur Khan annexed the country as far as Awadh and Katehar. Bengal was already independent, its rulers having combined Lukhnauti, Sunargaon and Satgoan into a single kingdom. Thus the boundaries of these provinces and kingdoms were determined as much by geographical conditions, as by the ambitions of the chiefs to extend their possessions as far as possible irrespective of any other consideration.

The boundaries of the centrally situated provinces of the Sultanate, such as Sambhal, Badaun, Agra, very likely followed the rivers wherever possible; yet it is not possible to determine them with any degree of precision.

*Political divisions under the Mughals and their basis.—*

The Empire of Babar after Panipat and Khanwah comprised very extensive territories, stretching from the line of the Oxus in the north-west as far as Bihar in the east. The tribal area, however, still remained independent. On the north his sway was limited to the plain while the southern boundary was marked roughly by a line joining Bayana, Ranthambhor, Gwalior and Chanderi.

No modification or redistribution of the administrative divisions was made either by Babar or Humayun. Nor is there any specific mention of a re-distribution of provincial and other administrative divisions under Sher Shah.<sup>1</sup> But it is certain that a reorganisation of the political divisions, that is to say, subahs, sarkars and parganahs, etc., was brought about under him on a rational though mainly geographical basis. The provinces of Agra, Multan, Lahore, Sambhal, (the modern Rohilkhand) Jaunpur, Malwa, Bihar, and Bengal are clearly mentioned in the chronicles. There is no reason to suspect that any redistribution was attempted by Islam Shah. In fact Sher Shah's organisation was pre-

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the fantastic theories of Qaunrgo in this connection see the author's 'Provincial Govt. of the Mughals,' Chapter III.

served and followed until Akbar undertook a redistribution of the empire into 12 Subahs, in 1581. Although this re-organisation might have involved frequent alterations of boundaries, especially in the case of sub-divisions, the basis of division was, as is clearly stated by Abul Fazl, only geographical arising from considerations of administrative convenience. "His Majesty" says A. F., "apportioned the empire into twelve divisions, to each of which he gave the name of subah and distinguished them by the appellation of the *tract of the country or its capital city*. These were Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Ahmedabad, Bihar, Bengal, Dihli, Kabul, Lahore, Multan, Malwa; and when Berar, Khandesh and Ahmadnagar were conquered, their number was fixed at fifteen." When subsequent annexations took place Kashmir and Qandahar were included in Kabul, Sindh or Thatta in Multan and Orissa in Bengal, by which the sizes of these three provinces were greatly enlarged, but the total number of the subahs remained the same.

No territorial additions were made under Jahangir excepting the Kangra district which was probably added to the province of Lahore. Under Shah Jahan the whole of the Nizam Shahi dominions (excepting Balaghat), Berar and a part of Telingana were annexed (1633-36). These three together with Khandesh were constituted into the province of the Deccan. But they continued to be treated as sub-provinces, their governors being responsible to the Imperial Government through the Viceroy of the Deccan. This, however, meant no addition to the number of provinces as Ahmadnagar was already a province under Akbar<sup>1</sup>. But the former sub-provinces of Thatta, Orissa and Kashmir being treated as separate provinces brought up the number to eighteen under Shah Jahan. With the temporary and nominal addition of Golconda and Bijapur towards the end

<sup>1</sup>The Nizam Shahi capital was shifted from Ahmadnagar to Daultabad in 1609 and subsequently to Aurangabad. For a full discussion of the growth of the Mughal provinces see the author's 'Provincial Government of the Mughals', Chapter III.

of Aurangzeb's reign the total number may be taken to have reached twenty, but no regular or systematic government was ever established in them.

*Factors which determined political boundaries.*—It will be evident from the above survey that the political divisions of the Mughals were determined by administrative convenience dictated mainly by regional and geographical and in some cases, traditional considerations. In the case of frontier provinces like Kabul, Kashmir, Qandahar, military considerations supervened and the attempt of the emperors was to make their boundaries by important strategical points. They were not based on religious, linguistic or racial interests.

The provinces of the Mughal Empire were divided into sarkars and sarkars into parganahs, the last being the lowest unit of administration. For revenue purposes each parganah was called a *mahal*, but occasionally there were more than one unit of revenue collection or mahal in a single parganah. The seaports had no territory like the parganahs; but they all represented mahals.

*Mughal system, forerunner of the modern.*—The various administrative institutions and departments of the Mughal government were the precursors of much of the framework of the modern administrative system which has grown on their model, although the spirit and policy of the present government are far otherwise and the form and origin of the ultimate executive authority quite different, in as much as the Mughal Government was national and Indian, while the modern government is foreign.

*Divisions and sub-divisions of a province.*—According to the Ain-i-Akbari each province was divided into sarkars and each sarkar into parganahs. The parganah was the smallest unit of administration. The parganahs sometimes contained one or more *thanas* which represented police sub divisions. Later in the 17th century reserved land (Khalsa) was divided into chaklas, under an officer called chakladar. The *sarkar* was like a modern commissioner's division serving as a medium of communication between the

parganah and the provincial authorities, and as an agency of general supervision and control. It will be noticed that the parganah which was, like the modern district, the unit of general administration during the Mughal period has been reduced to the position of a mere revenue division, and in its place the district has emerged as a new administrative unit.

*Another basis of territorial divisions : Khalsa, Jagir and Suyurghal*—The Mughals, like the Sultan of Dihli, divided their territories on another basis by which the administrative activities of the government were to some extent shared by what may be called an extra-state agency. This new basis may be called the assignment system. Under this system the 'Imperial Territory' proper, (apart from the hereditary states and 'zamindaris') was divided into :

- (i) Khalsa lands, *i.e.*, lands reserved for direct collection of revenue by the Imperial Government.
- (ii) Jagirs or assignments of land made to officials of the State as a means of payment of their remuneration.
- (iii) Suyurghal, *i.e.*, lands granted to pious and learned men by way of subsistence.

In the words of Moreland the essence of the Jagir system was 'to set aside particular items of recurring revenue to meet particular items of recurring expenditure, usually, but not invariably, the salaries and expenses of the Imperial Service, carrying certain obligations and duties, including maintaining a number of equipped horsemen, proportionate to each officer's respective rank and salary'. Suyurghal was a jagir without any such obligation of service. It is important to note that the conferment of jagir carried with it no other authority to the assignee except that of realising through his own servants, the revenue fixed and assessed by the Imperial Government. These jagirs were frequently transferred and re-shuffled from hand to hand.

*Subordinate and Tributary States.*—The entire Mughal



domains were divided politically into Imperial territories proper (*i.e.*, territories directly administered by the Imperial Government) and the subordinate and tributary chiefships which were, as a matter of expediency, suffered to continue with widely varying degrees of internal autonomy almost exactly like the modern native states, under the ægis of the British Government with their powers and duties defined by treaties and sanads. They are called zamindaris by Abul Fazl. Thus a very considerable part of the Mughal dominions remained under the rule of their old hereditary chiefs and was never directly administered by the Imperial Government.

So far as the status of these states was concerned all of them seem to have stood more or less on the same level. The Imperial Government seldom interfered in their internal affairs, except when compelled by political expediency. But, of course, in matters of a more formal nature such as the vassal's obligation to regular attendance at Court or the Emperor's control of the right of succession, the latter did not fail to assert his authority. The degree of Imperial control and the obligations of the states varied from nothing more than a nominal allegiance, such as most Himalayan States owed to the Crown, to a very wide one including personal service, attendance at Court, payment of tribute, and in many cases an implied obligation to enter into matrimonial relationship with the royal family.

Between these states of the Mughal period and the modern native states there is one important political difference noticeable owing to the manner in which they have been treated in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. While the numerous petty chiefships scattered all over the empire were placed generally under the jurisdiction of their respective provincial governments, the large states of Rajputana, were combined to form the province of Ajmer, each component state being treated as a *Sarkar*. It is, however, evident that they are so treated for revenue purposes only while their administrative and political autonomy remained unaffected. The only condition imposed upon all subordinate chiefs was

that none of them was allowed to coin money.

Apart from the treaty obligations which the chiefs had to fulfil towards their sovereign, they enjoyed full freedom in internal administration as well as in all other matters of a public or private nature, and enjoyed a far more independent and honourable position than the present native princes do under their sovereign.

## THE PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

*Introductory.*—The provincial and local machinery of administration forged by the Muslim rulers of India was from the very first inevitably a composite structure, comprising as it did both foreign and indigenous elements welded into a harmonious system. It was by the magic of Akbar's political vision and practical genius that these different elements became so nicely assimilated as to form a blend in which the distinctive character of the constituents was no more perceptible.

The two principal categories of the several institutions which combined to make up the structure of provincial government were the provincial organisation at the top and the local parganah and village institutions at the bottom. The former was modelled after the central structure which was essentially an adaptation from the Persian *Khilafat* organisation. The latter (village and parganah) institutions and their framework were purely Indian and had struck deep roots into the soil since time immemorial. The Mughals judiciously retained the ancient local institutions as the most stable and useful, and at the top, instead of superimposing an inelastic system on these institutions, so modified and adjusted the central as well as provincial administrative machinery as to make it the support and sanction of the former.

*The spirit and character of provincial government.*—The spirit and form of the provincial administration and the

position of the provincial authority in relation to the sovereign\* were the result of a process of evolution which was regulated and determined by two fundamental factors viz., (1) the character and principle of the monarchy and (2) the executive machinery built up by the first two Mughals and the Surs.

The Afghan monarchy was based on the principle of the kingdom being tribal property shared among the members of the community. The sovereign was only a *primus inter pares* and did not enjoy an inaccessible or sacrosanct position. Under such a system the position of the sovereign was bound to be extremely precarious and his hold on the provincial officers extremely feeble. That system contained germs of turbulent and disloyal propensities which were too apt to burst up at the slightest provocation or temptation. Babar and Humayun imported the Turkish species of monarchy which derived its authority from a divine source, but the atmosphere for the acceptance of such a principle was at the time most uncongenial. Paradoxical as it may seem it was given to Sher Shah, the Pathan-Sur King, and partly to his son Islam Shah by their dominating personalities and administrative ability to rear up that machinery and develop that political atmosphere which was essential for the tacit and almost unconscious recognition of the Turkish principle of sovereignty which Babar and Humayun had failed to establish. The inevitable result of this change was that the provincial authorities could not any more enjoy the same kind or degree of independence as they had done under the Afghans. Nor could they ever dream of rebelling with the object of seizing the throne. Thus while the provinces of the Afghan empire were like the more or less autonomous components of a very loose federation, those of the Mughal empire since Akbar's accession were provinces of a unified and consolidated empire fully under the control of the para-mount authority.

The aim and spirit of the provincial government was, of course, the same as that of the Imperial government, i.e., to be 'continually attentive to the health of the body

politic' and to provide to its people protection and safety from external danger and internal oppression and insure their economic welfare and freedom for self improvement.

*Provincial Executive.*—The head of the province under Akbar was officially styled the Sipahsalar (he was popularly called Subahdar and later only Subah). Under his successors he came to be called Nazim. Next to him in official rank was the Divan. These two principal officers shared between them the responsibility of practically the whole administration of the province. The Sipahsalar was responsible for the executive, defence, criminal justice and general supervision. The Divan was responsible primarily for the Finance Department, but he also exercised some judicial powers in civil and revenue cases and a general supervision of the department of the Sadr. The Sipahsalar and Divan were assisted by (1) a Bakhshi who had a multiplicity of duties to perform like the Imperial Bakhshi, and may be called the Quarter-Master General and Officer Commanding of the regular forces, (2), a Sadr, who was the head mainly of the religious department, charities and grants, (3), a Qazi or the Chief judge of the province; (4), a Kotwal, who had charge of internal defence, health, sanitation, and all other municipal functions, (5), a Mir-Bahr, who was in charge of port duties, customs, boat and ferry taxes, control of river transport, etc. and (6), a Waqia-Navis, the news recorder and reporter of the court. In addition to these another officer called Amin, i.e., trustee, was occasionally appointed in some provinces. His duties were probably of a supervisory and auxiliary character, and seem to have varied according to the circumstances and requirements of the occasion.

Sometimes very young princes and sons of nobles of high rank were appointed viceroys. In such cases a capable, and experienced person was invariably sent as 'ataliq' (guide and perceptor) to the young viceroy who was instructed always to follow the ataliq's advice, the latter being the de facto viceroy. Often a committee of several high officers was appointed to assist the viceroy. We also have instances

of officiating viceroys 'sent to act in place of the real incumbents' who had to be absent for one reason or another. In the 31st year of his reign Akbar found it necessary after due scrutiny to appoint two men to each province as joint governors. This practice, however, does not seem to have continued long. The appointment of the viceroys was made by an imperial order technically called the '*firman-i-sabati*', while the Divan of the province was appointed by a '*husbul hukum*' of the emperor bearing the seal of the Imperial Divan. The provincial Sadr and Bakhshi were appointed on the nomination of the Imperial Sadr and Bakhshi by the Emperor's orders.

Concerning the tenure of office of governors and other high officials of the province, no precise information is available. Tavernier, however, refers to a custom according to which a governor was expected to retire in three years. And from the actual practice of the frequent transfers of governors it is evident that they were not allowed to hold charge of a province for long. No super-annuation limit was fixed, the age limit of a government servant being determined only by physical capacity to work.

*Duties of the Sipah-Salar and other high officials.*—At the time of the appointment, an instrument of instructions was issued to the viceroy which contained : (1), instructions regarding the responsibility and scope of his work, his powers, privileges and limitations, (2), advice as to his private and public conduct, and (3), instructions to his subordinates to obey and co-operate with him. Thus his duties were very comprehensive involving as they did his general responsibility for the common weal and an oversight of the government functionaries of the Subah. His duties included also the administration of justice with great care and caution but he was not authorised to give capital punishment. He was to ensure peace and security and to provide facilities to the ryot so as to encourage agriculture as well as industry and trade in the country. He was to ensure complete religious liberty and to encourage learning. Lastly, he was to keep the army in good trim. Concerning himself,

he was advised to be abstemious and of good behaviour. Concerning his subordinates, he was authorised to punish them if any jagirdars or officers acted in contravention of his orders or in a manner prejudicial to the efficiency of the government.

The Divan, who was the head of the finance department, was also entrusted with very comprehensive duties. Besides being responsible for the assessment and realisation of revenue, he was to keep a watch over the treasury and to encourage the growth of agriculture by advancing loans to the peasantry in times of need and by adopting other suitable measures. The Diwan was sometimes invested with the auditor's office also. (Vide : Riyaz-us-Salatin, p. 170 Bib. Ind, tr. p. 168). Lastly, the Divan exercised full control over the allocation of expenditure to the different departments. Numerous records concerning the executive, revenue, irrigation, agricultural and charities departments were maintained in the Divan's office. Apart from this, the Divan and governor were so independent of each other, that they represented a sort of dyarchy in the province and indeed exercised a watch and supervision over each other's activities. Like the Sipah-salar, the Divan also had a numerous staff of superintendents, treasurers, clerks, and peons, in his office.

*The Sadr and the Qazi*—Next to the Divan, the most important officers were the heads of the religious and the judicial departments. It appears that the posts of Sadr, the Qazi and the Mir-Adl were generally combined and entrusted to one and the same person, although some instances are available of these offices being held by different persons. References to Muftis are also of frequent occurrence in connection with judicial administration. None of these, however, show that the Mufti was a regular official. He seems to have been a sort of unofficial legal referee recognised by public opinion by virtue of his great knowledge of the religious law. We find only one instance in which the Sadr-i-Jahan of Pihani was appointed Mufti of the empire.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Badayuni, Vol. III, p. 141.)

*The Bakhshi and the Political Remembrancer*—With the office of the provincial Bakhshi was generally combined that of political remembrancer (waqia-nigar). In the latter case, besides performing his military duties, the Bakhshi had to maintain his agents and reporters in all offices from the governor downwards, and to send to the emperor an abstract of the reports that he received.

*The Secret Service*—Besides the official remembrancer who reported about the activities of the public servants, a regular system of secret service under an officer called 'Sawanih Nawis' or 'Khufia Nawis' was maintained to keep the imperial government regularly informed of the activities of all government servants as well as such other occurrences in the country as were supposed to be worthy of being brought to the notice of the Emperor. As an instance of the efficiency of this department, it may be stated that even the highest officials including the governors and divans lived in constant awe thereof, because they were suitably punished if any reports were received against them and were found to be true.

*Nature and conditions of service*—The basis of almost the entire system of higher government services was military, just as the Indian medical service under the present system is. That, however, only meant that the conditions of the services were adjudged and governed by military rules, and not that the sole aim of the Mughal Government was military. All the high officers, although they held military ranks, performed civil duties unless requisitioned to war front.

There were no specific qualifications required for the various appointments, but actual facts show that great care and caution was exercised by the Emperor and other high authorities in the selection of their men.

*The relation of the Provincial Government to the Central*—In theory, as shown above, a complete change had come about in the relations between the provincial and central authorities since the advent of Akbar. Actually, however, the control of the central authority in an empire so extensive as that of the Mughals, wherein means of communication were:

comparatively slower, depended to a considerable extent on geographical conditions no less than on the personal equation of the monarch and the provincial viceroy. The obstacles and difficulties that a benevolent and strong ruler would have to face would arise from distance, from the nature of the locality or province, and from the recalcitrant, covetous or neglectful character of the viceroy or chief. That the obstacles in the way of a good and just administration were great cannot be denied. Hence the Mughals devised a series of checks to control and supervise the activities of the government servants, especially the governor and his ministers. Frequent transfers in the normal course, and immediate transfers, recall or dismissal in case of inefficiency or misconduct, constituted the first effective check. The second equally powerful check was the intelligence department comprising both the overt news-reporter's department as well as the covert secret-service, (سوانح نویس) the latter being a source of great fear to the government servants. Thirdly, the administrative dyarchy, created by the equal status of the provincial Divan and the Viceroy, each keeping a jealous watch over the other served as a most potent and unfailing check on the provincial ministry. Then came the imperial tours during which the emperors used to inspect the work of the local officers and heard complaints from the people against their mal-administration or oppression. If the emperor could not go himself on inspection tours, he used to depute some high minister or noble for the purpose. Todar Mal, for instance, was sent on such a tour to Benares when Bayazid was Shiqqdar of the sarkar of Benares. Lastly, the fear of public opinion and of representations by the people as a result of which commissions of enquiry were set up by the emperors, and in the event of their guilt being proved, even the highest officers were severely chestised.

*Provincial Finance*—No clear statement of the allocation of revenues or expenditure between the Central and Provincial finance is on record. But we know that besides the land revenue and the tributes from subordinate chiefs, customs including port dues and inland transit duties, salt



tax, income from mints and royal public works, zakat, and some miscellaneous charges, such as fishery taxes, were all included in the central revenues. These may be put under regular revenue as distinguished from certain casual source of income, such as presents, inheritance of unclaimed or heirless property and escheat, which come under irregular revenue.

Thus the major sources of state income were almost solely absorbed by the central exchequer, and only local and minor sources of income were left to the provinces. But no difficulty arose on account of this system because the Mansabdari System on which most of the services were organised, left very little burden on the provincial revenues. This was limited to payment of salaries of the clerical and subordinate staff and perhaps of certain public works and charitable grants to local institutions and deserving persons.

Among the local sources of revenue the following may be gleaned from references in the sources: (1) Duties on internal transit, (2) Duties on various markets in large towns, (3) Income from Public Works such as gardens, (4) Octroi. Regarding the first item our information is derived from foreign merchants. One of them Tavernier tells us<sup>1</sup> that each wagon load of merchandise was charged four rupees and a chariot only a rupee. On boats a different rate was charged. The merchants whose route lay through the territories of autonomous chiefs had to pay transit duty to them also. The imperial government did not attempt to interfere with their privileges. The next two sources, consisting of markets and Public Works, as we learn from the Mirat-i-Ahmadi, obviously yielded a considerable revenue because trade was very flourishing. There is no direct record of octroi but the market dues were perhaps treated as octroi. We learn from Manucci that the Kotwal used to raise a tax also from houses of ill-fame and brothels.

*Expenditure.*—Among the local items of expenditure

<sup>1</sup>See Prov. Govt., p. 327.

were the hospitals, chiefly meant for the poor and indigent, which were opened in many places. Then there were permanent Kitchens, alms houses, for distribution of food and clothing to the poor and needy. Sarais in every town and city, with all necessary comforts and a regular staff to minister to the needs of visitors, grants to local schools, temples, mosques, etc. constituted another item of provincial expenditure.

The expenditure on services and administration was incurred through the local divans and bakhshis, but it was controlled by the Central Government.

### Working of the Revenue System

Since Sher Shah's time, all the three immemorial methods of assessment viz., *Batai* or sharing (called *Ghalla bakhshi* or *Ghalla qismi* by Muslim historians), *Kankut* or estimate (*Nasq* and *Muqtei* were slightly modified forms of *Kankut*) and *Zabt* or measurement, had been in vogue. Akbar further elaborated them and introduced reforms in the methods as well as forms of revenue realisation. He improved and standardised the measuring instruments, the *gaz*, the *tanab* or *jarib*; he increased the wages of the collectors, and abolished the many illegal cesses which had grown up; he allowed choice to the peasantry to pay revenue in the shape of cash or kind, excepting the *kachcha* or decayable crops and finer crops, such as sugar, indigo etc., in which case cash payment was compulsory.

In the assignments of *Mansabdars* the latter had to realise revenues assessed by the government through their own officials. They could not realise a farthing more than the amount shown in government returns.

The assessment and collections of the revenue in the subordinate states was left to the chiefs concerned and the government only realised a fixed lump sum from them.

## Provincial and Local Judiciary.

*Position of Muslims and Non-Muslims in the State.*—According to Muslim law no non-Muslim can enjoy the status of a citizen in a Muslim State. But Muslim jurists were wise enough to extend to them a qualified citizenship by imposing various conditions on them as the *sine qua non* of their being allowed to exist as subjects of a Muslim State.

The actual practice, however, chiefly under Akbar and his successors, was far different from theory. Akbar's whole life was devoted to the effort of giving to Muslim Law an interpretation broad enough to extend to all his subjects, irrespective of community or creed, an equal status as citizens of the State, without any favour or partiality.

*The Organisation of the Judiciary.*—There were two main components of the Judicial system under the Mughals, (1), the official machinery consisting of the qazis, and other law officers, and (2), the local community and village panchayats or councils. The latter has constituted the basis of the system since time immemorial and was given official recognition and sanction by the Muslim rulers.

The provincial judiciary was presided over by the qazi and sadr of the province, the two offices being usually combined. He was assisted occasionally by certain other officers such as mufti and mir adl. The divan, the kotwal, the amil and shiqqdar also had some share in the administration of justice. The qazi dealt with religious cases, the divan with civil and revenue disputes and the kotwal and shiqqdar with criminal cases.

There were qazis in every city, town, and even in large villages. But it is certain that most disputes in the country-side were first decided by the local community panchayats and the need for appeal to higher courts seldom arose.

*Police and Jails.*—The Police of the province was under the kotwal. He carried out his duties with the help of

sarkar, parganah and thanah officers of his department. They were also assisted in this work by the faujdars, shiqqars and even by the amils.

We have also detailed and clear references to the jails maintained by the government. The condition of the prisoners in the jails was not unsatisfactory and it was easy for any man of honourable position to secure temporary release or better comforts to the prisoners.

*Public Works.*—The Public Works of the Mughals may be classed under two categories—(1), edifices meant only for royal use, such as forts, palaces, mosques, tombs, etc., and (2), those meant for the use and benefit of the people, such as cities and city walls, roads, canals, tanks, artificial lakes and water reservoirs, bridges, gardens, and other pleasaunces. The Mughals lavishly spent on both classes of public works. In this they followed the example of their Hindu predecessors. They laid out many roads by clearing forests and connecting distant parts of the country to encourage trade and commerce. They built numerous sarais and organised a good postal system. They built canals, tanks and artificial lakes in hilly regions by throwing dams across the openings between two neighbouring hills such as had been done by Indian rulers since ancient times. They laid out gardens and step-wells and organised fairs and markets. They also spent enormously on state edifices for their own use.

In this constructive work the rulers were greatly helped by generous and well-to-do men among the people. It was considered a part of religious duty both by the Hindus and Muslims who could afford to sink wells, construct tanks and hospitals and plant trees and gardens and build mosques and temples on road sides for the comfort of travellers and strangers. In carrying out these works of public utility they were encouraged and helped by the state.

Education also received due attention on the part of the rulers. Although there was no regular department of education, the department of charities and grants devoted a

considerable portion of its donations to help educational institutions run by molvis and pandits in mosques and temples. The Mughals also opened a number of state hospitals in towns in which medicine was distributed free. There were hospitals for beasts and even for birds.

*The Sarkar and the Parganah.*—Each subah was divided into a number of sarkars and each sarkar into parganahs or mahals, the latter being the lowest unit of administration. Below the parganah was the village panchayat which was popular in origin but was recognised and backed by the government. Akbar's empire comprised 105 sarkars and 2,737 mahals, but these figures were frequently changing owing to rearrangements and fresh annexations.

In the sarkar the administration was in charge of the faujdar assisted by an amil or amalguzar, a qazi and a kotwal. The faujdar was mainly concerned with the maintenance of law and order and enforcement of the government rules and regulations. He generally maintained a small army and supervised the work of the police also. In case the amil needed his assistance in the realisation of revenue or to punish contumacious cultivators, the faujdar was to give him the required assistance. There was a network of thanas in the country and one of the main functions of the faujdar was to guard the countryside by means of the thanas (police stations). Under Sher Shah the executive head of a sarkar was called shiqqdar-i-shiqqdarān, which term seems to have been replaced by the term faujdar under Akbar for the sake of convenience.

The amil was mainly concerned with the assessment and realisation of revenue, while he had also the power to punish miscreants whenever necessary. The kotwal of the sarkar was the head also of criminal justice besides being in-charge of the police and municipal duties of the chief town. The qazi held charge of civil justice when the parties were Muslim. Thus the administration of justice in the sarkar was mainly shared by the kotwal and the qazi, the former acting as a magistrate not only for the head-quarters but for the whole of the sarkar.

*The Parganah and its Officials.*—The parganah had three principal officers since Sher Shah's time, namely, the shiqqdar, the amil and the qanungo, who were assisted by an adequate staff of treasurers (fotahdars) clerks, patwaris and peons. It seems that the functions performed by the faujdar and the kotwal in the sarkar, were in the parganah entrusted to the shiqqdar alone. The latter had the duty of maintenance of law and order, of general supervision and of assisting the amil in the performance of his duties. The fotahdar of the parganah was responsible to him and under his control. There was also a qazi in each parganah.

*Other Political Divisions.*—In addition to the sarkars and parganahs into which the greater bulk of the empire was divided, administrative exigencies necessitated the creation of certain other political divisions in some localities. These divisions, or more correctly speaking, administrative centres, were sea ports, frontier out-posts and forts, and thanas. The seaports were governed by a superintendent, (mutasaddi) who was assisted by other judicial, police and civil officers like the sadr and bakhshi of the sarkars. Similarly, frontier out-posts and forts were under faujdars. They were created mainly to guard the frontiers and to keep in check the turbulent activities of rebellious neighbours.

In the reign of Shah Jahan another class of political divisions named chaklas, was created by the prime minister Saadullah Khan. In each chakla he appointed a faujdar (chakladar) and an amin and made the karoris of the mahals subordinate to the amin. Possibly these divisions were created to facilitate assessment and realisation of revenue.

*The administration of the towns.*—From the admirable account of the police and municipal organisation of Ahmadabad furnished by the Mirat-i-Ahmadi, we can infer that a similar system of administration should have obtained in all important towns. The chief official in-charge of the town was the kotwal. His duties were so wide as to appear to be impossible for a single man to

perform. They may be summarised under the following broad heads:—

(1) Watch and ward of the town for which he had to maintain guards,

(2) Control of the market including rates of commodities, the standards of weights and measures etc.

(3) Care and legitimate disposal of heirless property.

(4) Watching the peoples' conduct and prevention of crime.

(5) Prevention of social abuses such as Sati.

(6) Regulation of the cemeteries, burials and slaughter-houses.

For the successful performance of his duties the kotwal was advised to make himself easily accessible to all so that the miscreants might be punished and grievances redressed without delay. He was also expected to keep a register of all the people in the town and by means of spies to watch the activities of visitors, merchants and travellers. Similarly it was his duty to see that the streets and public places were not misused or made dirty, to prevent cheating by shop-keepers and dealers and to restrain profligacy, and debauchery so far as possible. Realising that the duties of the Kotwal were very heavy the government empowered him to employ the requisite number of assistants to carry them out efficiently and well.

*The village community.*—No account of any of the pre-British administrative systems of India can be complete without an adequate reference to the local village panchayat system. "Local Government" says Sidney Webb "is as old as the hills". This is more true of India than of any other country. Most of the functions of the Government had been carried on by the village councils since time immemorial and the Mughal rulers extended to this useful institution their recognition and protection.

### Conclusion

From this brief review of the administrative system as

developed improved and established by that master-builder and statesman, the Emperor Akbar, it would be observed that his experiment was no mean administrative achievement. It was an experiment which has left a lasting impress on the present administration. It was an experiment which both by its policy and its practice, by its successes as well as by its failures, has bequeathed to the succeeding generations a valuable political heritage which is full of lessons to the present rulers of the country.

The most outstanding of these lessons, which Akbar's farsighted policy has conveyed, is the sound principle that a government to be secure, must rest on the confidence and affection of the people and not on bayonets. But Mughal polity also demonstrated the instability inherent in a despotism, that is to say, in a system which depends for its strength and efficiency on the guiding genius of an individual. This disadvantage of individual rule reflected itself also in the working of the local administration.

On the other hand it clearly showed the great advantage of local responsibility which afforded real and much better protection to the people than the modern irresponsible police and the endlessly winding, expensive, lengthy, and worst of all, mechanical and inelastic system of justice and law devoid of the necessary human element, has ever done, or perhaps can ever do.